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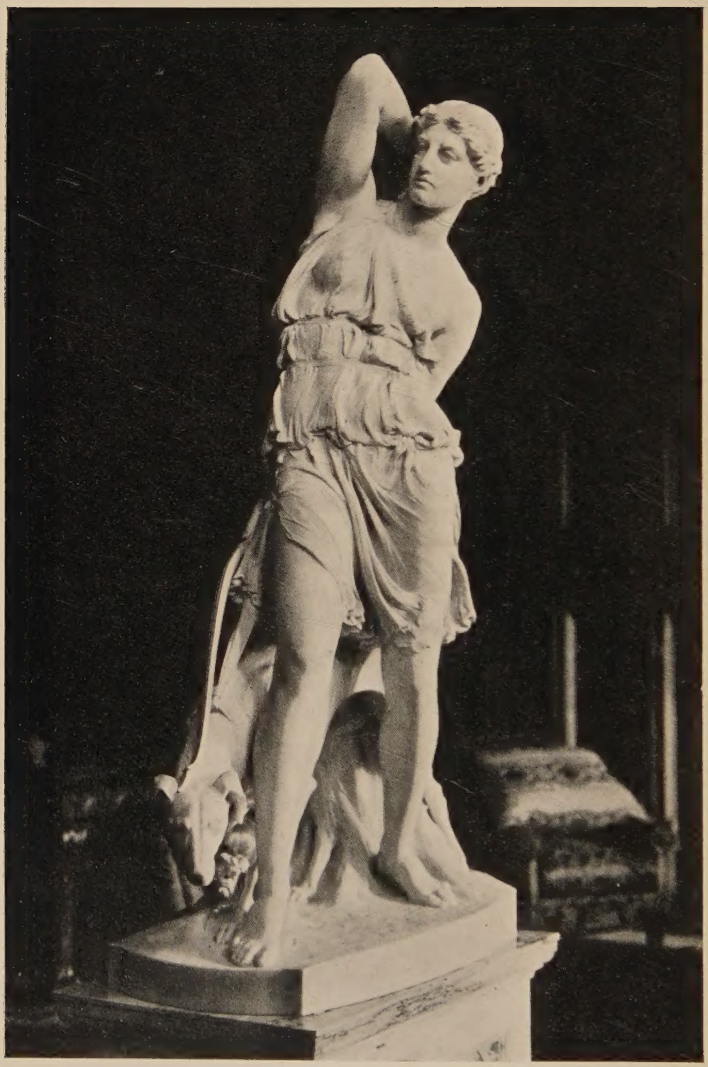
THE IDEA OF COVENTRY PATMORE



"Patmore's enthusiastic interest in ecclesiastical sculpture was awakened by seeing, in the summer of 1882, Mr. Thorneycroft's superb statue of 'Artemis' which belongs to the Duke of Westminster. The virginal freshness of this figure appealed with extraordinary fervour to Patmore's imagination."—Mr. E. Gosse's *Coventry Patmore*, p. 163.

THE IDEA OF COVENTRY PATMORE

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BY

OSBERT BURDETT

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INTRODUCTION

The following is an attempt to present the substance of Coventry Patmore's poetry. He is one of the few poets who had a system of thought, and in the present chaos of opinion any general theory should be welcome. Though this fact has been admitted, his theory has not been studied, partly because no one has given serious attention to his idea, partly because the detail which it introduced into his epic has been judged adversely by his critics on the ground that poetry, even on the grand scale of the epic, was incapable without degradation of assimilating the contemporary atmosphere which it was his main endeavour, his poetical point of honour, to express. He is one of the few poets who have tried to build a philosophy of life out of the experiences of love ; and his attempt is original because it is not, as were previous attempts, based upon any disregard or arbitrary manipulation of the facts, but was inspired by an unusually frank admission of them. If we value this poetical honesty, we shall study the attempt in a fair light. If not, the difficulties resulting from the honesty will appear unnecessary because they could have been evaded. But ' Life, some think, is worthy

of the Muse'. Those who think it worthy give special honour to the poet whose substance is of equal importance with his form ; and the standing given to the epic is given to the one class of poem wherein Poetry is married to the Tale. For the tale is the essence of literature, and the idea or substance which demands an epic measure bespeaks a poet whose very substance is symbolic.

There have been two previous attempts to make love the basis of a comprehensive philosophy. The first was made by Plato, the second by Dante. Each of his predecessors influenced Coventry Patmore, but he differed in a capital point from both. The Platonic theory is too familiar to require exposition or a detailed criticism here. It was a very beautiful structure with a curious congenital defect. The Platonic theory of love is a pyramid standing on its apex. For this reason it can never become a sufficient philosophy for men in general, though it will ever nourish the attempts of other poets. Dante's idealization of love as the Divine Wisdom, revealed to him in the person of Beatrice, busied itself too much with the flowers and fruits, too little with the roots and soils. It is not a fit philosophy for men in general, because it forgot that a theory of love, if it is to satisfy men, must pay respect not only to the soul but to the senses, not only to the imagination but to the body of man. Each theory idealized one aspect of human relations. Plato chose the friend, Dante the unmarried woman, Patmore the wife. While the two earlier theories were alike in their hostility to marriage, Patmore made married love the definition of love itself.

When the three theories are compared, it is not difficult to discern which has the most self-evidence for its claim to truth. Neither the friend, nor the unmarried woman, is necessary to the continuance of the race. Both these theories omit the family, which is society's most simple unit, from their scheme. In consequence, each theory tends to divide the life of man into an ideal, and into a vulgar necessity. These two primaries are divorced: they not merely fail to cohere, they are forbidden to do so. The extravagance, in the strict sense of this word, which the Platonic theory encouraged, is well known ; so are the vagaries of thought and conduct in which Dante's theory expressed itself. Because both disregard the necessary part which love plays in the continuance of the race, both omit love's simplest fact. When separated from its root in that necessary function, the renewal of life, the Platonic theory by the omission of woman sacrifices the natural man ; the Dantesque, by the omission of the wife, idealizes woman apart from nature. In each case nature took her appropriate revenge. In the Platonic philosophy the body had theoretically no function at all ; and the Athenians were confronted with a dilemma which they did not solve. The embrace of lovers was a barren thing because the fruits of love were held to have no need of the embraces. Instead of seeing disorder in his theory, Plato declared the body to be unruly, and compared it, in transparent desperation, to a runaway horse. Similarly, in Dante's theory, the unattainability of the lovers' union was made the source of the inspiration of love. When the

Provençal Courts of Love drafted a code of law, they declared that love could not exist between married people. That there was something grotesque in such a notion was evident in the disorders of conduct, the extravagance of thought, and the hyper-subtleties of emotion to which the theory led. The *Vita Nuova* like the *Symposium* has the oddity of a beautiful thing seen in a false light. The social reactions in either case were disorderly. You cannot build a philosophy of life upon adulterous love (the consequence is implicit in the theory), because adultery itself is a disorder. Dante's philosophy of love needs the institution of marriage in order to sacrifice it, Plato's in order to exist at all. In the same way you cannot build a comprehensive philosophy of life upon a theory of love which is concerned with men alone. Yet one of the hardest things for a clever man to learn is that woman is a part of the human species.

The common point in both the earlier theories then is their hostility to marriage. The explanation seems to be that a Greek married in order to beget children, to preserve his name, to continue his family. It was a duty of citizenship to him. In Dante's time marriage was mainly political. Feudalism made it so ; and political alliances were as customary in Italy as they were in feudal England or France. But the primary attraction which draws men to women is a desire, even if it proves to be a transient desire, for union. A desire for a union which can only be approximate or for a union which is hostile to the theory of desire is no sure basis for a

philosophy of love. Union there must be for love's fulfilment. In the full, rich sense of the old word, the consummation of love is possible only to a lover who is a husband, and to a woman who is that lover's wife. If this reasoning is sound, Coventry Patmore's idealization of married love is the only one of the three which satisfies the primary conditions, and can claim comprehensiveness thereby. Indeed, because it fulfils the primary conditions it has been despised as commonplace. But to be founded on a commonplace was its distinctive originality. Its claim to reality, its appeal to our attention, reposes here.

To elevate this contempt into an attack upon Patmore's theory, the objector would have to show either that it is based upon some fatal omission, like the theories of his predecessors, or that it leads to disorders of conduct and vagaries of thought similar to theirs. It is so easy (in print) to place an imaginary opponent upon the horns of a fanciful dilemma that I am tempted to forbear, because I see no escape from it. But if I see no escape from it, if the arguments in favour of Patmore's theory are self-evident, I must seek to explain the ancient, may I not add, the traditional, prejudice against marriage, and having allowed for it, then proceed to show that the mood which it represents, the view of life to which it leads, is not overlooked by Patmore, nor excluded from the erotic philosophy which he designed. If Patmore's theory provided for this objection, its claim to comprehensiveness will not seem vain.

It is true that the institution of marriage is held

to be hostile to the contemplative and to the adventurous life ; but the latter is for youth chiefly, and when lasting, as with Sir Richard Burton, is not always found incompatible with marriage. But married life is best suited to the mean which lies between these two extremes. But because the adventurous and the contemplative life are the extremes, they are for the few ; and the lives of the few, like other lives, must sacrifice something to the peculiar virtue which they encourage. A philosophy built upon the experience of the few, the peculiar, has its place. Their lives are valuable in the criticism which they offer and for the contrast which they provide. But a philosophy of life, though it must respect these, should not be based upon them. Its aim is to set a standard for the lives of less differentiated men. A vital philosophy is one which is fit for mankind in general and yet leaves room for the rarer men to breathe. Now Patmore's philosophy of love is generous to such spirits, and finds room for them within its scheme. It expressly admits that if woman is ' the way ' for most men, she is not the way for all, and that she becomes an intruder to those who do not need to see the reality of which her body is the mirror otherwise than directly in reality itself. But the path which she reveals to most men is the same path, according to Patmore, as that which the contemplative pursues without her help. It is not a path different from his, nor, Patmore insists, is the end to which it leads other than that which it is the special privilege of the contemplative to follow. In this recognition lies the final difference between the

philosophy of Coventry Patmore and the theories of his predecessors. He is not only more simple but more comprehensive than they. For this reason Coventry Patmore's philosophy of love has a special claim to consideration, and its corollaries are manifold. His poetry remains for all who care to read it, but since such popularity as it once achieved never led to a consideration of the substance, the intellectual idea, contained within it, there is perhaps justification for an attempt to present the substance in the hope that the interest inherent in the theory may lead to a fuller recognition of the beauty which is abundant in the verse.

CHAPTER I

THE THEME AND ITS HYPOTHESIS

'To speak but of forgotten things to far-off times to come', because the present was incapable of attention, was Coventry Patmore's idea of his function as a poet. It sufficiently explains the neglect which still conceals him. Yet it is a fact of experience that the things which have been forgotten are no less rich in wonder and delight than new discoveries; and the former riches also have to be earned. It was the mark of originality, a word which points backward, to perceive this in the age of Macaulay; to hold it in the atmosphere of Shelley and Swinburne and Walt Whitman, and to expound it as the nineteenth century died in the ferment of Tolstoy, Ibsen, and Strindberg. No disparagement of these names is intended, but the contrast should not be missed. Patmore's attitude was hardly typical of Victorian writers, most of whom were in revolt; indeed his *Angel in the House* was considered, and perhaps is still by those who have not read it, merely an elaborate essay in sentiment, or at best a novel in verse. Obviously, were it only this, it would not have become a classic. It is more

plausibly supposed that Patmore's place in literature rests upon *The Unknown Eros*, those last verses which complete the philosophy whose base was laid in *The Angel in the House*. The truth is that either is incomplete without the other ; and the latter, in which the verse flies upon a more exalted pinion, raises such a splendid vision in the reader's mind, that nothing which its writer wrote can be dismissed without respectful curiosity. In fact, as his biographer, Mr. Basil Champneys, told Patmore in regard to the metre of *The Angel*, 'the simplicity and ease of the verse have detracted somewhat from the popular estimation of the poem, by leading many to take it less seriously'; Patmore replied, inverting a well-known saying of Byron's, that 'easy reading was often damned hard writing'.[1] We can forgive an unsympathetic reader for beginning with *The Unknown Eros* ; but the theme is not for him if he is content to stop there : his capacity for the higher flight must be judged by his mastery of its lower levels. The vision recognized, its symbolic value considered to the world in which we live, the reader will turn next to its varied applications. The few extraordinarily concise prose essays then await him, where the applications of the theme are made to religion, to art, and to politics. What is the theme of which Patmore said :

> I have the very well-head found
> Whence gushes the Pierian Spring ?

Married love, the Eros which is indeed unknown,

[1] *Coventry Patmore*, by Basil Champneys, vol. i. p. 161.

for it had never been made a great poet's central theme before.

The best illustration of this contention is a very interesting record of a conversation which passed between Coventry Patmore and Aubrey de Vere just before the publication of the first instalment of the epic. It is preserved by Mr. Basil Champneys, from whose completer statement I take the chief point.

> 'The Siren woman', Patmore pointed out with animation, 'had been often sung by the Pagan Poets of old time, and the Fairy woman by the Troubadours of the Middle Ages. But that Love in which', as he affirmed, 'all loves centre, and that Woman who is the rightful sustainer of them all, the Inspiration of Youth, and the Consolation of Age, that Love and that Woman', he asserted, 'had seldom been sung sincerely and effectually.'

It is still the Siren who inspires most poets and artists, and do they not perhaps miss a subtle warning in the fatality that is traditionally associated with her as the inspirer of their song? The virgin is always sung, sometimes the mother, but where the wife? The uneasy dissatisfaction left by many pictures of the Madonna and Child is due to the fact that it has been not the wife and her child but the unmarried woman and the heir who are the two subjects of the pictures. In both these aspects of womanhood and of infancy the peculiar character of *married* love is wanting, for the appeal of both is to masculine, indeed to bachelor, sympathies. It is characteristic that we hear nothing of Penelope except when she is unmarried in everything but name, and a Siren still to all comers.

Andromache has never been made the subject of an epic, though, significant fact, the one passage where she is introduced as wife and mother is perhaps the most moving and famous passage in the *Iliad*. Even Browning, so much favoured by the Muses alike in his genius and in his wife, never perceived the opportunity awaiting him, though there is a quality in 'A Woman's Last Word' which is enough to show that the love there celebrated is different in substance and temper from that which usually engages the lyric poets. These facts, I think, are sufficient to support Patmore's contention, and to prove the originality of his discovery, though the more we meditate upon them, and the more illustrations we find in their support, the stranger does that discovery appear. If the reader will consider it for himself, he will gain infinitely more than any further elaboration here would give to him.

The more transcendental the philosophy, the deeper must its roots lie in the familiar ground of human capacity and experience. Writers on love have often forgotten this : we have had an abstraction, or a lust of the flesh, rarely a love that seeks to satisfy the soul as well as the senses and the senses equally with the soul. It has been clear to every one but the Greeks that the possibility of such a love exists in the mutual attraction of man and woman, and that their union offers the natural satisfaction of the complex desires which are included in the word love. In courtship, at all events, the imagination is satisfied, a vision comes to the soul, the windows of heaven are open. In marriage the body can find the mysterious point where flesh

and spirit are indistinguishable. In the fruits of this embrace, the body makes its supreme return, and the family thus created is the unit in which the individual becomes complete, and is itself the foundation of society. These remarks may be forgiven, for it was on such simplicities as these, which are nowadays mentioned mainly to be disputed, that Patmore built the ladder which rose from the Deanery in Salisbury Close to the summit of Christian mysticism. He took these commonplaces seriously, and his meditations upon them proved to an attentive student that simplicity has a mysteriousness which will give a richer reward to contemplation than the most complex question which the intellect can invent for itself.

> The truths of love are like the sea
> For clearness and for mystery,

he writes. What is the first truth of love with which we are familiar?

'At least once in a lifetime,' Patmore writes in his essay on 'Attention,' 'and by some hitherto unexplained awakening of full attention for a little while, what man but has seen a woman, and what woman a man, before whom all their previous "ideals" have paled; and if by subsequent nearness, they get within the eyes' focus and the vision is dimmed, that is the fault of the eyes, and no discredit to the value of the thing seen, as is proved by the way in which death restores the focus, and with it the vision.'

What does this vision portend?

'Every one who has loved and reflected on love for an instant', we read in 'The Precursor', 'knows very well that what is vulgarly regarded as the end of that passion, is, as

the Church steadfastly maintains, no more than its accident. The flower is not for the seed but the seed for the flower. And yet what is that flower, if it be not the rising bud of another flower, flashed for a moment of eternal moment before our eyes, and at once withdrawn, lest we should misunderstand the prophecy, and take it for our final good ? '

Again, ' Natural love ', the Light which lighteth *every* man which cometh into the world,

' . . . is the Precursor of the Divine. . . . The love between God and the Soul is constantly declared to be, in its highest perfection, the love that subsists between the Bridegroom and Bride (thy Maker is thy Husband, etc. etc.), and our only means of understanding and attaining to these supernatural relations are the meditation and contemplation of their types in nature.'

It is evident then why he regarded nuptial love as ' the first of themes sung last of all ', and saw in the rhapsodies of lyric poets but the recognition of a passing moment, which, not being meditated seriously or with ' attention ', had the oddity of a beautiful thing for a moment seen in the twilight. His own claim therefore was ' not to have disbelieved in love ', nor to have done it the wrong

> To count it, with the rest that sing,
> Unworthy of a serious song.

It is worth while to insist upon this difference, because no one who is at all familiar with the poets can fail to admit that the idea of love which they leave with him is extremely vague. Every change is rung upon the feelings excited by this passion. The grave, the gay, the tender, the fierce, the despairing ; these manifestations are exquisitely

described. But they are not love itself. Love, as we read the poets, comes to mean any of the hundred moods which it occasions during courtship. Of love itself, apart from familiarity with these moods, what idea do we carry away? With Patmore we have no such hesitation.

> The love of marriage claims, above
> All other kinds, the name of love.

This is refreshingly definite; and of married love he says that it 'bears the clearest marks of being nothing other than the rehearsal of a communion of a higher nature'. This communion is that of God with the soul, His intimacies with whom are the theme of *The Unknown Eros*. It is true that 'all religions have sanctified this love, and have found in it their one word for and image of their highest hopes'. But these 'aspirations' and 'hopes' are mostly vague; and the vague, like the 'infinite', Patmore knew to be a 'horrible word', 'at feud with life'. Blake himself had less respect for outline than Patmore, who was as witty as Blake in his proverbs, and wrote without Blake's disadvantage of direct dictation from the spirit world.

We may illustrate the definiteness of his philosophy of love by comparing it with another, that of Plato, whose thought influenced him much when a young man and, indeed, to the end of his life. The view expressed by Plato through the mouth of the wise Diotima may, perhaps, be summarized thus. The recognition of beauty in any human form or lovely shape was explained by her to be the recollection of the beauty with which the soul had

lived before it was born into the body of a man. The aim of the soul was once more to reunite with that absolute beauty from which it was mystically separated in this life, and that it might at last attain to it, the hours which it spent on earth must be devoted to the pursuit of beauty here that, ladder-like, the soul might climb from a knowledge of the beauty of the body, the supreme embodiment (as it is, in the male form) of all the beauty of earth, to a kinship with the beauty of the mind, and from that at last gain the final embrace of union with the absolute from which it sprang. Poetry and Philosophy were here united, and the child of this union was the Socratic art of love. Patmore's criticism of Plato is to be found in *The Angel*, where the supposed author of the poem, Vaughan, contrasts the Platonic theory with his, or Patmore's, own :

I saw three Cupids (so I dream'd),
Who made three kites, on which were drawn,
In letters that like roses gleam'd,
' Plato ', ' Anacreon ', and ' Vaughan '.
The boy who held by Plato tried
His airy venture first ; all sail
It heav'nward rush'd till scarce descried,
Then pitch'd and dropp'd, for want of tail.
Anacreon's Love, with shouts of mirth
That pride of spirit thus should fall,
To his kite link'd a lump of earth,
And, lo, it would not soar at all.
Last, my disciple freighted his
With a long streamer made of flowers,
The children of the sod, and this
Rose in the sun, and flew for hours.

Whatever views may be taken of Platonic or

Patmorean love, it does not seem reasonable to doubt that the latter offers, and has been known to attain, a greater measure of realization. When the transcendental heights are compared, the Patmorean philosophy is no less rich than the Platonic. Its roots lie deep in human needs, and its flower consequently soars easily into the upper air, without losing definiteness of form and outline.

We may remind ourselves that, in making Nuptial Love the centre of his religion and philosophy, Patmore was only 'digging again the wells which the Philistines had filled'. The Fathers, Saints, and Mystics of the Church predicated almost all that he did of this relation. He expressly said, 'I make it my only claim to be heard' that these are 'the sources from which I have derived my matter'. How generally this source has been forgotten can be shown in an amusing way.

In a 'Fragment' by St. Bernard, which is mainly a very minute and almost word-for-word exposition of the symbolism of *The Song of Songs*, we read :

> The love of God and of the Soul can be expressed in no way so perfectly as by the mutual love of Bride and Bridegroom, . . . since this relation is the ideal one of love, it is well that the name of Bride should be given to the soul that loves.

In these words St. Bernard was only repeating a commonplace of traditional Theology. Well ! no louder laugh has been raised at the expense of the Church than that excited by the running commentary attached to each chapter of *The Song of Songs* in the Bible. Eager young men and learned

students have pointed out the absurdity of applying the terms of Christian theology to the most purely sensuous love song in the world. Ewald has studied the manipulations suffered by the original and still incomplete text. Renan and others have attempted to combine the remainder in the dramatic form which seems properly to belong to it. In consequence, the Song becomes clearer to us ; its sentences fall into their proper places, and we thank the exegetists for disencumbering the play from the omissions and confusions which have obscured it for centuries. In the light of this knowledge, and feeling as it were the ground beneath our feet, we examine again the Church's mystical glosses. The modern reader laughs at them indeed, unless perhaps the thought strikes him that a Church which believes that nuptial love is the rehearsal of a divine communion might have done worse than to embody among its sacred books the most poignant expression of human passion. 'The natural first and afterward the spiritual.' The more we can learn of the purely sensuous origin and intention of this poem, the more pregnant does the poem become for symbolic use. Coleridge, more tersely than Carlyle, defined a symbol to be a part which contained the whole. But St. Paul's words to the Corinthians on the subject of matrimony are apt to drive all his others from our minds. His words to the Ephesians, quoted later in Chapter V., are forgotten. At least since Origen, the Church has always chosen to interpret the relation of God to the Soul in the terms of human passion. It has been less eager to see in marriage an initiation holy in itself. True, marriage is called

a great sacrament, the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. That is admitted. But the Church has preferred rather to praise the relation of God to the Soul in the language of lovers than to praise the lovers themselves. 'God is Love' we find it written, but we do not find, at least with the same insistence, that nuptial love is God-like. That was Coventry Patmore's opportunity. His real original contribution to Western mystic literature is to supply the emphasis, elsewhere lacking, on the divine nature of human love. He mapped every meandering channel of its outward and inward grace. He wrote a breviary for married lovers. He was as pleased with its valleys as with its heights, with its smallest pleasure as with its deepest mood, with the home in which it grew, as with its first transport of passion. The very dress of the bride, the very games of the children, were equally symbolic to him. This is the quality which made his *Angel in the House* popular with the general public of the time, though it laid him open to the criticism that language could not maintain distinction when describing these domesticities. How far this was the fault of the poem or how far that of the critics we shall see in the next chapter.

If this philosophy of love was rooted in the home, the principles to be discovered there, as we shall see later on, were applicable to every phase of life and human society. Of the philosophy itself man is the theme, and woman the hypothesis.

CHAPTER II

THE DATA OF EXPERIENCE

To make married love under contemporary conditions of life the theme of a modern epic, was a more original and ambitious task than appears at first sight. Apart from the contemporary atmosphere under which it was faithfully presented, the theme itself was new. The subject of many a lyric poem had never excited the epic Muse before. There existed a few marriage songs, like Suckling's 'On a Wedding' and Spenser's 'Epithalamium', but even this last was more a lover's rhapsody on the bridal bed than a hymn in praise of marriage. No poetry, and at the time very little prose, had given a thought to all that lay beyond the wedding night. Hence Patmore exclaimed against the

> Idiots that take the prologue for the piece
> And think that all is ended just when it begins.

At the time of the poem's appearance Shelley's 'Epipsychidion' was fresh in men's minds, and hardly less fresh was Byron's 'Don Juan'. Marriage was held to be the prosaic anti-climax of passion, and love was praised for its lawlessness, its rebellion against the slavery of the ring. We all remember

Shelley's description of married life to be 'the dreariest and longest journey' of the soul, and how married people were either 'chained friends' or 'jealous foes' to one another. To Patmore marriage was not the end nor the anti-climax of love, but its fulfilment; and he showed, as none had shown before him, that within its narrow circle, and because of its limitations, it was capable of delights, and discoveries, more wonderful than the extravagant adventures of Don Juan. As Patmore's hero puts it:

> I vow'd unvarying faith, and she,
> To whom in full I pay that vow,
> Rewards me with variety
> Which men who change can never know.

Patmore was fully conscious that a lively conviction of this kind would appear fantastic to his contemporaries, not to mention ourselves. For the sentimental novels of the day, to which the story of *The Angel* can be very well compared, were popular rather as pious 'romances' of courtship than as statements of matrimonial fact. Besides, the stories ended with the wedding. They were not written with the ring of conviction, because they stopped the drama at the end of the first act. They were timid and superficial tributes to the respectable ideals under which courtship was then regulated. The art of the time left these in disgust or despair, and the typical pre-Raphaelites from Rossetti to Morris turned to past ages, in order to escape from contemporary life into beautiful dreams. When love was the theme, it was 'love among the ruins', a

dreamy reconstruction of a romance the charm of which lay in its remoteness. In technique, too, as Mr. Gosse has remarked, there was a tendency to escape from simple models, and to recapture beauty by the importation of exotic forms, the ballade, the rondeau, the villanelle, the Italian sonnet, the *terza rima*, and by the creation of those new and curiously involved metrical patterns, which gave us at their best such successes as Rossetti's 'Love's Nocturn', and Morris's refrains which complicated many of his stanzas with a reduplicated echo.

In subject and in form Patmore stood equally apart from his fellow-poets. The everyday subject of marriage was best suited, in his opinion, to the humblest of English metres, the octosyllabic quatrain, of which an example has been quoted above. In the Prologue to *The Angel* he warns us that his subject is merely 'cheered by the coupled bells of rhyme'. In later life, he gave many ingenious reasons in defence of his employment of this metre. The truth is it needed no defence. This measure lends itself perfectly to the neat and clear expression of thought, whether in a sustained exposition, or in a single epigram. Patmore had matter for both in plenty, and wholly relied upon that matter to sustain the interest in the simplest of stories, which, if not so loaded with ore, could offer few surprises or excitements. He repudiated every adventitious aid, for he found the subject itself overflowing with neglected interest. His justification lay just there, and he had no difficulty in displaying it.

But a word should first be said on the early poem *Tamerton Church-Tower*. Its alternative title,

First Love, aptly expresses its relation to *The Angel*, of which it is only a preliminary, though careful and suggestive, sketch. Mr. Frederick Page, a student of Patmore, has devoted, however, an essay to it in *The Catholic World*, of New York, for July 1912. Mr. Page says, ' The necessary purification of desire (necessary, since " unblest good is ill ") is the theme of the poem ', which contrasts the ' hot, excited, dusty ride southward in the company of Frank ' (a comparatively gross and common person), with the lonely ride north of Frank's companion, the poet, who between the two rides had become both married and a widower. Mr. Page well insists that the changes in the landscape are symbolic of the change of heart which the early love and its disastrous end had created in the widower ; and in one place *The Angel* itself declared that the failure of *first* love was often a subject for thankfulness, because this failure was usually required to direct a lover's attention to the nature of a revelation which is often too dazzling to be apprehended at first by an ' untutor'd taste '. The versification shows the influence of Coleridge. Two fine stanzas are :

> What guilt was hers ? But God is great,
> And all that may be known
> To each of any other's fate
> Is, that it helps his own ;
>
> And in the maiden path she trod
> Fair was the wife foreshown,
> A Mary in the house of God
> A Martha in her own.

In short, *First Love*, to choose the happier title,

describes an experience which, however taken for granted in *The Angel*, was well worth the few hundred lines which Patmore devoted to it.

The epic begins with a prologue and is divided into two books, each of which consists of twelve cantos as brief as those of the *Divine Comedy*. Each canto consists of one or more short preludes, the last of which is often an epigram, followed by a section of narrative. The preludes form a chorus and contain most of the philosophic reflections of the poem, to which they give the intellectual setting. They have indeed been preferred to the narrative portions, since they are free from the faithful detail which marks every stage of the story to the scandal of the sophisticated who suppose that the circumstance of modern life is unworthy of the Muse. Patmore never shared this timidity, and though in later editions he expunged some of the detail, he was wiser than his critics in the knowledge that to shirk the domesticities would be to shirk the pomp and circumstance of married love, which are its native atmosphere as inevitably as the moonlight and the balcony are that of courtship. The poem could not possibly have been an epic poem without the detail ; and that this has never been recognized, that it is always mentioned apologetically, shows that the subject is still misapprehended by the critics, who have been more ' attentive ' to the precedents of poetry than to the plain facts of marriage which lie under their eyes. To attempt to portray them, to give them, as Patmore often did, successfully, is a triumph of realism, for these characteristics are so infinitely small that it requires a finer

imagination to divine and to express them than to discover and describe the sensational facts which were the aim of Zola and his often admirable followers. Patmore's theme so possessed him that he preserved the innocence of eye which has been obscured in the multitude that regards marriage either as the enemy of love or as the best way of concluding its preliminary infatuation. How innocent his eye was can be seen in many passages, such as that in which he notes how married lovers indulge in little games which they would be too shy to let their children see. Who has observed such intimacies before, and how can the subject of married love be treated faithfully if they are omitted? As we read, we are compelled to recognize their truth, but our shyness persists when seeing them in print.

To avoid the vulgar imputation of writing an autobiographical poem, Patmore feigned in his Prologue that a contemporary poet, called Vaughan, confided to his wife on the eighth anniversary of their marriage that he was engaged on a poem upon an entirely new subject. With somewhat cruel truthfulness to probability, he makes the poet's wife inquire if the new subject is the Fall of Jerusalem or the life of King Arthur, whereupon Vaughan replies that the subject is Herself, his Wife and, as finally crowned in *The Unknown Eros*, the 'love, that grows from one to all'. A year later, Vaughan hands to her his first Book, and in the course of *The Angel* the supposed authorship is occasionally referred to.

Here we may pause to remember that, among

Coleridge's many unfulfilled designs, was one for 'what still appears to me the one only fit subject remaining for an epic poem—Jerusalem besieged and destroyed by Titus'. It is most probable that this design suggested the subject put by Patmore into the mouth of Mrs. Vaughan. The influence of Coleridge upon Patmore can hardly be exaggerated. His prose style no less than the direction of his thought bear a remarkable likeness to those of Coleridge, as the latter's *Aids to Reflection*, for instance, shows. The present book is not intended to be a study of Patmore's literary origins, but Mrs. Vaughan's suggestion at the opening of *The Angel*, when traced to that which I believe to have been its proper source, should emphasize sufficiently an influence hitherto almost wholly unexplored.

The first canto, which is entitled 'The Cathedral Close', contains in the opening Prelude an invocation to Love, which is important because it warns us at the outset that Patmore's aim was to acquire the power of saying things 'too simple and too sweet for words'. His recognition of their import is contained in the following utterance:

> The richest realm of all the earth
> Is counted still a heathen land:
> Lo, I, like Joshua, now go forth
> To give it into Israel's hand.

In Sarum Close, the subject of the first canto, we hear of Dean Churchill, a widower with three daughters, with whom Felix Vaughan had been intimate six years before. His pleasure on renewing their acquaintance is increased by the discovery that they have outgrown the priggishness of girlhood,

and are now full of charm and grace, happily set against the background of the Deanery, which is described as follows :

> To be there as a friend, (since more),
> Seem'd then, seems still, excuse for pride ;
> For something that abode endued
> With temple-like repose, an air
> Of life's kind purposes pursued
> With order'd freedom sweet and fair.
> A tent pitch'd in a world not right
> It seem'd, whose inmates, every one,
> On tranquil faces bore the light
> Of duties beautifully done,
> And humbly, though they had few peers,
> Kept their own laws, which seem'd to be
> The fair sum of six thousand years'
> Traditions of civility.

In such an atmosphere Felix quickly began to fall in love with all three daughters, in that expansive, first phase of the heart which elsewhere in poetry has never been so minutely described. The Deanery offered to him that achievement of manners which is indeed ' the tradition of civility ', and it was some time before the three daughters, thus irradiated, ranked themselves in his regard. Then Honoria stepped into the first place and Mildred and Mary into the second. Their house had fixed itself in his memory from the time when he had last seen it at Christmas six years previously, and his mind still retained the picture :

> The fire, lighting the large, low room,
> A dim, rich lustre of old oak
> And crimson velvet's glowing gloom.

On his return, this atmosphere seemed the

proper setting of the leisure in which the flower of manners grew, for true culture is best expressed in manners, since they display the habit of a soul, in which knowledge, taste, and judgement have become instinctive through perfect assimilation. Such surroundings make any people worthy of them delightful, for they are a picture in miniature of one phase of a high civilization. To one who was not a lover, the house would be no less attractive than its daughter, and to a lover himself, her fascination would appear at once the proof and the product of its tradition. Surely this is obvious enough, yet so conscientious a critic as Mr. Gosse, in his study of Patmore, can find no other description of these surroundings than the adjective 'absurd'. This is how he criticizes the picture: 'The accidents of civilized life—a respectable house, elegant clothes, the amenities of a reformed (and endowed) religion, all the comfortable and absurd prose of contemporary middle-class felicity—are transfigured by the delirium of the sexual instinct.' But must there not be something lacking in the sincerity of a critic who declares unworthy of the Muse the kind of house which he and every cultivated person wishes to inhabit, the kind of manners which he most desires in his own friends and family, the whole world of detail, in fact, which it has been the aim (and reward) of his own success to achieve? Mr. Gosse's next sentence gives a refreshing return to common sense, for he is dealing once more with a purely literary point. 'The cleverness of Patmore', he properly remarks, 'in dwelling upon all this, which *everyone* had vaguely felt, but no one had ever

been willing to record, is positively astonishing.' The word which I have ventured to print in italics shows that Mr. Gosse knew in his heart that the 'absurdity' of which he complains resides not in 'the accidents of civilized life' but in the literary fashion which makes it customary to mock at them. I have insisted on this error, because this fashion has blinded men's eyes to Patmore's originality on the one hand, and led them to apologize for portions of the poem which are really necessary to the peculiar glory of it. In a poem of contemporary life the atmosphere is necessarily important. To insist upon it was an essential part of Patmore's scheme.

In the second canto, before Honoria has taken her pride of place in his regard, Felix confesses that he had never gone to a ball or fête except expressly, though perhaps at first unconsciously, in search of his predestined wife. The Prelude to the third canto, which is entitled 'Honoria', warns us of his ultimate choice, and begins the analysis of courtship:

> He meets, by heavenly chance express,
> The destined maid; some hidden hand
> Unveils to him that loveliness
> Which others cannot understand.

Her beauty haunts him, and by the familiar 'paradox of love' he longs to suffer for her, if only because

> Her graces make him rich, and ask
> No guerdon; this imperial style
> Affronts him; he disdains to bask,
> The pensioner of her priceless smile.

With matchless economy of phrase, Patmore then proceeds to analyse how

> swift pursuit by small degrees,
> Love's tactic, works like miracle;

but he is careful to emphazise that hearts corrupted by worldly (or literary) fashion, will find a coldness in 'the songs I sing, the tale I tell', and that if a man or woman is not noble in love, neither will be noble in any relation of life.

An absence of a week is here introduced into the story, which is taken up again by a visit from Felix to the Deanery, where he finds his cousin Frederick Graham (of whom more anon), a naval man, who is evidently in love with Honoria. Observation having convinced him that Frederick has no chance with Honoria, he pities his cousin with egoistic magnanimity, and goes to bed dreaming that he has vanquished every rival to her hand.

In the Prelude to the fourth canto, entitled the 'Rose of the World', Patmore dares to affirm that woman has been 'marred less than man by mortal fall'. This hard doctrine means that woman, being the substance (while man is but the form) of truth, has a power of making 'the faithless' not only conceive heaven, but also the hope of attaining it. The passage is interesting because it is typical. Patmore's highest exaltation of woman always resolves itself into praise of her unconscious power of making visible to man spiritual truths to which he would be blind unless they were reflected in the mirror of her body for him. Her glory, in fact, is to be the means whereby man may obtain his full perception of

Reality, and all nature combines to endow her with graces, external and internal, for this purpose. Then follows the famous Rhapsody on Clothes :

Boon Nature to the woman bows ;
She walks in earth's whole glory clad,
And, chiefest far herself of shows,
All others help her, and are glad :
No splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome
But serves for her familiar wear ;
The far-fetch'd diamond finds its home
Flashing and smouldering in her hair ;
For her the seas their pearls reveal ;
Art and strange lands her pomp supply
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,
Ochre, and lapis lazuli ;
The worm its golden woof presents ;
Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
All doff for her their ornaments,
Which suit her better than themselves ;
And all, by this their power to give,
Proving her right to take, proclaim
Her beauty's clear prerogative
To profit so by Eden's blame.

This delightful passage, so fresh in observation that even animals might pardon its perversion of their point of view, is followed by an epigram, entitled ' Compensation ', which declares that a well-dressed woman ' displays more loveliness than she conceals '. This is interesting because it shows how strictly Patmore wished to confine himself to the limits of modern life, and because the preceding passage proves that modern love was as proper to the epic, if its atmosphere was faithfully observed, as any ancient theme. But how different the content ! A sculptor even might admit the truth of this epigram, though its application to the male

figure would be absurd. There is no compensation, except comfort, in modern trousers. It will be noticed how skilfully the rhapsody on clothes avoids any mention of a particular fashion, in the course of suggesting the quintessence of 'dress'. To compare the passage with the fashion of the time is irrelevant; and Patmore, very skilfully, avoided giving his praise of fashion any date.

In Cantos IV. and V. there is a pause in the story. Felix gives himself up to dreaming of his lady, and spends his time in a lover's meditations. This gives to Patmore, who makes the most of this interval just because a lover's imagination is teeming during its progress, the opportunity of comparing man and woman at this initial season of love. The lover's virtues, he remarks, often lack beauty which is 'the badge of virtue', while the woman, at least to her lover, 'fails more graciously than he succeeds'. The mentality of the two sexes is contrasted as follows:

> Or say she wants the patient brain
> To track shy truth; her facile wit
> At that which he hunts down with pain
> Flies straight, and does exactly hit.

The 'special crown' of woman is love, the special crown of man truth, and the pre-eminence is given to her for the reason that

> love is substance, truth the form;
> Truth without love were less than nought;
> But blindest love is sweet and warm,
> And full of truth not shaped by thought.

This is an interesting comparison. The meaning can be illustrated by Patmore's later criticisms of

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science, which was often rebuked by him because it proceeded on rationalistic principles, which start from zero—that is to say, which do not accept the primary mystery of life or of God as the preliminary hypothesis, and reason from that ; but start on the assumption of the sufficiency of the intellect, and refuse to accept any data which the intellect itself cannot resolve. This is not the place to elaborate this criticism, but it may be summed up in his aphorism :

> Who search for truth and do not start from God
> For a long journey should be shod.

This criticism is mentioned because it explains why Patmore gave the place of importance to woman. She confronts man as an unreasonable being, who is attractive in spite and because of her unreason, and who therefore was invented by God to remind man by the perpetual witness of her presence that the acceptation of mystery must be the beginning of wisdom, and that the powers which move man's imagination most deeply and fructify most abundantly in his mind are those of which his intellect can never give, nor, in contact with them, ever desire to give, a rationally intelligible explanation. When falling in love with a woman a man makes spontaneously an act of faith, and as this act of faith is the moment of unveiling, so other acts of faith are also the beginning of wisdom. This irrational creature, woman, is important because she opens doors to greater mysteries than herself ; just as she is less important than man when weighed (and weighed unfairly) in the same scales as him-

self. What is the woman's position in regard to her lover? If he, the one who aspires after truth, is attracted by the absence of this aspiration in her, and in the degree of his possession of it is her superior, so she is attracted by the aspiration which she does not share, but which she is sufficient of a man (*homo*) to recognize as giving him an element of strength or dignity. There is, Patmore declares, a sufficient element of the opposite sex in either to make the nature of that opposite comprehensible. Homo is the man and the woman, but nevertheless man and woman separately are alike homo in little.

It is the lover, of course, who is most alive to this mystery and this glory 'by the unexplained awakening of full attention for a little while' to which we have already referred. To accept this mystery without seeking rationally to explain it: to accept the fact, and reason from the fact, was Patmore's initial act of faith on which he reared his whole philosophy. That love is a fact, and also mystery, is obvious to every one. Patmore therefore believed that the wise course lay in accepting the mystery as a foundation for thought, instead of seeking to explain so primary a fact by secondary reasons, the only effect of which is to make love more obscure. He was therefore a lover, only one fully conscious of the revelation which he received. The lover in *The Angel* meditates at this point upon these things, and in admiration of the delicacy which attracts him in his lady, asks:

> Who is the happy husband? He
> Who scanning his unwedded life,
> Thanks Heaven, with a conscience free,
> 'Twas faithful to his future wife.

Self-conscious now of the magnet which draws him to the Deanery, Felix will not go there unasked, a symptom characteristic of this stage of feeling. In Canto V. we find him spending his time analysing the vanity of the other people with whom he was self-compelled to consort so long as no invitation reached him. The concentrated egoism of this mood is elaborately described in the course of these meditations :

> To my necessity how strange
> The sunshine and the song of birds ;
> How dull the clouds' continual change,
> How foolishly content the herds ;
> How unaccountable the law
> Which bade me sit in blindness here,
> While she, the sun by which I saw,
> Shed splendour in an idle sphere !
> And then I kiss'd her stolen glove,
> And sigh'd to reckon and define
> The modes of martyrdom in love,
> And how far each one might be mine.

An invitation to dinner duly arrives, and the correct note in which it comes is followed by a postscript which says that She and her sisters have found some violets where he had declared that there were none. Three are enclosed. Who does not remember such a note, and reading again and again a thrilling postscript of this kind ?

In the Prelude to the sixth canto the question is debated why the charm that his lady has for him should be obscure to others. It is resolved by the ingenious logic of love, which declares that his preference is not more unjust to them ' but only not unjust to her '. This delightful evasion of an

argument by a courteously disguised assertion of the very point which remains to be proved is exactly the kind of nice appraisement in which intellectually excitable lovers indulge. The passage is concluded by a reiteration of the theme :

> This little germ of nuptial love,
> Which springs so simply from the sod,
> The root is, as my song shall prove,
> Of all our love to man and God.

I cannot forbear to quote also the epigram which concludes this Prelude. It is called ' A Riddle Solved ' :

> Kind souls, you wonder why, love you,
> When you, you wonder why, love none.
> We love, Fool, for the good we do,
> Not that which unto us is done !

A thought can be packed neatly into this metre, and it is natural that one who was teeming with ideas upon a subject which, familiar to all, had never been explored attentively, should choose its ready aid to concise expression.

After dinner at the Deanery, the young man, who, we have been informed previously, has £600 a year of his own, besides academic honours, timidly asks the Dean if he might become the acknowledged lover of Honoria. With the foolishness of a lover he little knows that this had been a cherished wish of the old gentleman's and of his own father ! The scene is an example of the realism for which Patmore has been criticized so much. But details which have their place in an ordered scheme cannot be judged fairly apart from it, nor is it intended

that quotations should be made of them. On turning to my earliest copy of *The Angel* I find an exclamation mark against this passage. Thirteen years have passed since my pencil jumped to make it. It is a bond between me and those who have found Patmore unreadable ; but now without hesitation my judgement affirms that the poem would be a lesser poem without this and kindred passages, and that their insertion does not convert narrative poetry to illiteracy, but redeems poetic idiom by the introduction of familiar matters. Such a passage will weather with time and will be enjoyed as we now enjoy Elizabethanisms, and modern narrative poetry will become the more divorced from life and ultimately perish if the attempt is never made to subsume contemporary matters. To exclude them is really to debase the poetic currency, and to sacrifice to our present self-consciousness the touches which will become beauties in a few hundred years.

A new realm is often desired for poetry. Such a new realm exists in modern life, and the introduction of its trappings tests poetical language so severely that in the face of a sophisticated tradition only a very fine style can survive the attempt. Some of Patmore's details were revised as a concession to his readers. His attempt, however, must be welcomed by all who apprehend the proper quality of poetic style. Vulgarity of style really consists in literary or other mannerism, and this, unlike the genuine style of which Patmore was a master, collapses at the lightest breath of current matter ; in fact, its weakness is to have no language for the ordinary incidents of life.

So, accepted by the Dean, Felix goes in search of the lady, and thinking of her ignorance of the conversation in which he had just taken part, he finds that her unconcern

> Gave to love's feast its choicest gust,
> A vague, faint augury of despair.

This preliminary success of the lover provided Patmore with an opportunity to rebut in advance the popular notion that love dies, as the other appetites are admitted to die, at the moment of its gratification. In the Prelude to the seventh canto he warns us :

> How vilely 'twere to misdeserve
> The poet's gift of perfect speech,
> In song to try, with trembling nerve,
> The limit of its utmost reach,
> Only to sound the wretched praise
> Of what to-morrow shall not be ;
> So mocking with immortal bays
> The cross-bones of mortality !
> I do not thus. My faith is fast
> That all the loveliness I sing
> Is made to bear the mortal blast,
> And blossom in a better Spring.

It is this ' rehearsal of a communion of a higher nature ', for so he held love to be, that gives symbolical importance to the extravagances of a lover's moods, which those who do not possess the clue to them regard as fatuous absurdities. It was Patmore's business, then, to dwell on these with special care, and he was certainly an adept at this department of psychology. He notes at this point, for so the interest is maintained until the lover declares himself, that

trifles serve for his relief,
And trifles make him sick and pale;
And yet his pleasure and his grief
Are both on a majestic scale.

Majestic because they are symbolical. Impatient at the impatience with which men have brushed aside as unimportant the revelation which falling in love is admitted to be, he asks:

How long shall men deny the flower
Because its roots are in the earth,
And crave with tears from God the dower
They have, and have despised as dearth?

He then prophesies to the indifferent crowd that

fools shall feel like fools to find
(Too late inform'd) that angels' mirth
Is one in cause, and mode, and kind
With that which they profaned on earth.

A love story is incomplete without love-letters, and this seventh canto is devoted to a long letter in which the young man, still too timid to declare himself in words, pours out his feelings. It is naturally an extravagant performance, but to Patmore every extravagance of love-making is full of symbolical significance, and any one in search of the arguments which this situation requires will find a quiver full of them. Who has not found distraction wanting, but in words less eloquent than these?

For when, indifferent, I pursue
The world's best pleasures for relief,
My heart, still sickening back to you,
Finds none like memory of its grief.

This letter is not posted, but buoyed by the excite-

ment of having written it, the lover decides to put the matter to the issue at once. An interruption cheats him of the occasion, but his succeeding mood is one of positive assurance that a revelation has been made to him indeed. This mood is described in the Prelude to the eighth canto, where he affirms of his moment of vision :

> That, had the splendour lived a year,
> The truth that I some heavenly show
> Did see, could not be now more clear.

Of the reception of this revelation, which comes to all lovers, Patmore sadly notes :

> An idle poet, here and there,
> Looks round him, but, for all the rest,
> The world, unfathomably fair,
> Is duller than a witling's jest.
> Love wakes men, once a lifetime each ;
> They lift their heavy lids, and look ;
> And, lo, what one sweet page can teach,
> They read with joy, then shut the book.
> And some give thanks, and some blaspheme,
> And most forget ; but, either way,
> That and the Child's unheeded dream
> Is all the light of all their day.

As in the illumination of childhood Wordsworth found ' intimations ' of immortality, so Patmore, who maintained to the end a profound admiration for Wordsworth's poetry, found in love an intimation of immortal union. The above passage reminds us, however, that this intimation was not of love, even in its most exalted phase, alone. The relation of a pair of lovers was only the most familiar example of the nature of being which could be discerned everywhere throughout the universe. We

must never forget that this philosophy had its purely intellectual side, and sprang from the recognition of an entity, composed of two complementary parts, to be found at the root of all experience. The polar magnet is another expression of it. Love is only the expression of this dual principle in *man*, and if this 'page' is studied, the theme will be recognized wherever the 'book' is afterward opened. The analysis of love contained in *The Angel* is the process of awakening to the existence of a principle to be found at work in every department of experience. Extremes meet at the centre of indifference, and Patmore therefore again and again returns to insist upon the importance of this experience, which is so familiar that it is commonly supposed to have no significance at all. The most remote and the nearest objects become equally vague to us. It is the middle distance alone which is so placed as to compel continuous attention. To delineate the philosophy of love which Patmore made his theme, it is necessary, therefore, to proceed at leisure, for only by noting as with fresh eyes every minor contour of the familiar landscape can its character be seized. We are so familiar with the subject that its names, its phrases, have become little more than phrases to us ; and we must arrest the attention which is lost through a want of strangeness in the whole picture by a minute observation of each familiar landmark if we would see all that the inattentive eye has come to miss by familiarity with the principal outlines. Patmore seizes every occasion, however, to insinuate an element of wonder by the happiest description of common things. What

could be better than to follow the above refrain on his main theme by fixing for us the nature of 'The Spirit's Epochs'? These epochs, he observes, are not the crises of life or of love :

> The day of days was not the day ;
> That went before, or was postponed ;
> The night Death took our lamp away
> Was not the night on which we groan'd.
>
> I drew my bride, beneath the moon,
> Across my threshold ; happy hour !
> But, ah, the walk that afternoon
> We saw the water-flags in flower !

The love of an object is the perception of its beauty. This perceptive faculty is heightened in the actual moment of love, and this is what makes Patmore exclaim, else perhaps unaccountably,

> Spirit of Knowledge, grant me this :
> A simple heart and subtle wit
> To praise the thing whose praise it is
> That all which can be praised is it.

The story of the eighth canto describes an expedition to Stonehenge. During its progress the lover sucks the faintest perfumes of her beauty :

> No fold or fashion of her dress
> Her fairness did not sanctify.

We all remember such happy occasions when the limit of delight seems to have been reached. The imagination in this hour looks ahead and sees the future unfold in one long afternoon of similar harmony. This joint content gave a new and richer colour to the relation of the two, for love grows rather by want of discouragement than by incite-

ment from without. Like a flower, given the leisure it will contentedly unfold itself, for this content is the outward sign of a growing interior harmony. In dwelling on this in poetry, in making the story wait on such a mood, Patmore again displays his mastery. Felicity is not a mood which has lent itself to description so often as sorrow, and if it is to be made interesting the story-teller must have an eye for the subtlest ripples on its lake, and pause to wonder at every several colour reflected by the shadows in its depths, which the ordinary traveller will pass without a glance in their direction.

The pause is prolonged by the departure of Honoria and her father to London on a month's visit, and this absence seems to suggest the subject of the opening Prelude of the ninth canto, which deals with the sense of absence that comes to one in marriage who has ceased to be loved. In the case chosen the wife is the neglected one, and her tragedy, says Patmore, consists in her failure to please.

> Man must be pleased; but him to please
> Is woman's pleasure.

This account of the relation of the two, which may sound biassed in coming from a man, is thoroughly characteristic of Patmore, who was married three times himself, apparently to the complete happiness of his wife on each occasion. The type of woman described in this Prelude is one who yields at the first sign of returning warmth, and Patmore himself was so masterful that we may suppose his attraction would naturally be felt by a woman

correspondingly yielding and gentle. As we shall see later, he believed that no woman after marriage could ever find content until she was sure that she had found her master, but this observation is introduced here because his description of the typical wife, and similar opinions, need the reminder, for what it is worth, that few men have had a longer, and consequently in a man of his powers, a more extensive practical knowledge of matrimony. Since he believed the woman to be by nature compliant, so long as she was handled in the right way, he again reminds the reader here that he is thinking of no exceptional experience, but that the mutual harmony which he describes is within the reach of all. He therefore again tilts at

> the vile crew
> Which see no splendour in the sun,
> Praising alone the good that's new,
> Or over, or not yet begun.

Those who do not appreciate ' common graces ' will eventually shut themselves out from the light of God's countenance, which is here displayed for our mortality in simple things. Gratitude therefore is an active good, a bracing of the soul for the high favours for which the world, mistaking gratitude for greediness, thinks it cynical to hope. The test is this :

> The grateful love the Giver's law ;
> But those who eat, and look no higher,
> From sin or doubtful sanction draw
> The biting sauce their feasts require ;

and the wise can be discerned from the foolish by the way in which they respect themselves :

Endow the fool with sun and moon,
Being his, he holds them mean and low;
But to the wise a little boon
Is great, because the giver's so.

This is a foretaste of the manner in which Patmore unfolds the doctrine of fidelity.

When seeing his lady off on the platform, Felix gives to her a 'Petrarch worth its weight in gold', but is careful merely to 'blame' the old fount in which it is printed. Honoria, he almost hopes, will lose it, so much a luxury would self-sacrifice become in his present mood. He torments himself, as the train starts, with apprehensions of the danger which she will run in London, and fears lest she

Might come back alter'd, having caught
The foolish, fashionable air
Of knowing all, and feeling nought.

His apprehensions cover all that concerns her, even to the point of wondering whether her canary will be fed and her roses watered. In this way he entertains the time in a maze of unnecessary anxiety, till the attraction of her home overcomes every other impulse, and he wanders where she is accustomed to pass, and observes the bushes against which her dress was wont to brush along the familiar footpaths.

The Prelude to Canto X. describes 'The Joyful Wisdom' in lines which serve to warn us from the fool whose many disguises never fail to betray his long face and parade of earnestness:

Would Wisdom for herself be woo'd,
And wake the foolish from his dream,

She must be glad as well as good,
And must not only be, but seem.
Beauty and joy are hers by right;
And, knowing this, I wonder less
That she's so scorn'd, when falsely dight
In misery and ugliness.

What, he then proceeds to ask, is that quality which endears goodness to us, and which when observed we immediately desire for ourselves? It is not, he says, the character of childhood or youth, the ease of a man of the world, the vision and abstraction of the poet, certainly not the vigorous energy of the patriot or 'the people's man', nor the fervour of 'the Saint' of the conventicle, not even the quality by which a man becomes great, but rather that sunniness of soul which is associated with men like St. Francis of Assisi, who

Should their own life plaudits bring,
Are simply vex'd at heart that such
An easy, yea, delightful thing
Should move the minds of men so much.

We are then told the secret of their virtue:

They live by law, not like the fool,
But like the bard, who freely sings
In strictest bonds of rhyme and rule,
And finds in them, not bonds, but wings.

The subject of Canto X. is a visit to Church with the Dean's family. Felix, who had been asked to breakfast, woke at three and drawing aside the blind is provided with this happy description of the chill of morning twilight:

The moon shone yet, but weak and drear,
And seem'd to watch, with bated breath,
The landscape, all made sharp and clear
By stillness, as a face by death.

During the service the reason why he loved her came to him, a thought which repeats in an undertone Patmore's central theme :

I loved her in the name of God,
And for the ray she was of Him ;
I ought to admire much more, not less ;
Her beauty was a godly grace ;
The mystery of loveliness,
Which made an altar of her face. . . .

The more he loved, the young man meditates, the more he yearned for something more divine than she, which leads him to conclude that

Him loved I most,
But her I loved most sensibly.

Since Patmore held a willing compliance, and the gentleness which accompanies it, to be the peculiar duty, and therefore the peculiar joy of women, the only manifestations which could chill his regard were 'a lack of lovely pride' and any show of roughness. Thus the first Prelude of Canto XI. begins :

The woman's gentle mood o'erstept
Withers my love, that lightly scans
The rest, and does in her accept
All her own faults, but none of man's.

As others are blind to the charm of his own lady in a way that he has previously explained, the lover now is careful to admit his own blindness in the case of those whose beauty is unapparent to him.

How does Patmore regard a woman who has been 'betrayed'? The defenders of monogamy are challenged to deny that the 'chastity' of the home is supported on the pillar of prostitution, and that the degradation of the prostitute is the sacrifice willingly imposed on her (by the men) for the sake of the 'purity' of their own wives and daughters. The scorn cast at the former is that which gives the cream of its praise to 'purity'. Does Patmore share this view? The Prelude to Canto XI. says:

> Behold the worst! Light from above
> On the blank ruin writes 'Forbear!
> Her first crime was unguarded love,
> And all the rest, perhaps, despair'. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Good is thy lot in its degree;
> For hearts that verily repent
> Are burden'd with impunity
> And comforted by chastisement.
> Sweet patience sanctify thy woes!
> And doubt not but our God is just,
> Albeit unscathed thy traitor goes,
> And thou art stricken to the dust.
> That penalty's the best to bear
> Which follows soonest on the sin;
> And guilt's a game where losers fare
> Better than those who seem to win.

This is the chief reference to this subject to be found in Patmore's writings. To him monogamy offered the proper and natural satisfaction for the passion of love. In life, as in art, limitation is the source of all delight. (He expressly declared that the only people who perhaps cannot afford to marry are the younger sons of members of the upper class.) Consequently, to him, with the temptation there was

also provided a way by which it might be borne. He further declared in 'Love and Poetry': 'Nothing can reconcile the intimacies of love to the higher feelings unless the parties to them are conscious—and true lovers always are—that, for the season at least, they justify the words, "I have said, Ye are Gods"'. His whole tendency was rather to nourish the healthy elements in man than to pay much heed to his weaknesses. Indeed he pointed out that whether a man

> serve God or his own whim
> Not matters, in the end, to any one but him.

We may suppose then that, alive to the facts of life, he dismissed the question because the opportunity had been provided for the holy satisfaction of love. If this, like other satisfactions, were ignored or not waited for with patience, the many, who were congenitally incapable of apprehending the mystery of love, must eat of the husks which their appetites had chosen until the day came, if it came at all, when they saw themselves as they were, the victims of disordered passion. Such a view, being a renewed vision of the order of love, would gain, beside its own compensation, a peculiar reward, since a lover finds in 'past corruptions, if they are really past', a reason for increased affection. Vice, he described as passion in disorder, virtue as passion ordered duly. A right choice was all-important to him. The dilemmas that at once arose when a wrong choice was made were not for him, but for the man who made it; whose punishment, in fact, began with the dilemma in which his error placed him.

Here we may anticipate his views on the end of the State by asking whether the structure of society should be designed on the basis of the weaknesses of man, or whether it should be founded to encourage his excellences. The former method is favoured by most modern thinkers, who are rationalists, for it is more rational to suit the structure to the strain which the average brick is able to bear, than to do the best which can be done with the best, if insufficient, material available. The former method is more considerate of the majority. The latter favours the few, for the best are necessarily the few. The difficulty of adapting the State to the average weaknesses of man is that, if his weakness is always the first consideration, a mass of half measures will result, which will grow ever more complicated in accordance with the incalculable; for weakness is incalculable. It is building a State on a foundation of sand, of which the only predicable result is the certainty of perpetual crumbling. The difficulty of building a State designed to encourage the excellences of the few consists in the fact that the idea of justice, as an end, must be replaced by the idea of nobility. Privilege must follow, and though the wise may be worthy of the privilege, the same cannot be guaranteed of their children, and privilege which is not hereditary offers none of the necessary security that privilege and the moral fruits of privilege will be preserved. Patmore believed in hereditary honours because he said that they made honour itself hereditary. From this it will be apparent, in the light of the preceding remarks, that Patmore preferred the limited success of the

aristocratic method to the, to him, inevitable failure of the alternative. On the subject of divorce we find in *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*, among ' Aurea Dicta ', the following pronouncement :

> Love is a recent discovery, and requires a new law. Easy divorce is the vulgar solution. The true solution is some undiscovered security for true marriage.

This may not carry us far, but it illustrates Patmore's already noted tendency to seek security for excellences rather than to sanction substitutes for those who fail to attain to them.

To return, however, to the eleventh canto. In the second Prelude he observes :

> 'Tis truth (although this truth's a star
> Too deep-enskied for all to see),
> As poets of grammar, lovers are
> The fountains of morality.

He then proceeds to show that as the poet can only be the fountain of grammar so long as he respects its necessary checks (for ' poetic license ' is one thing and the *curiosa felicitas* which occasionally transcends grammar quite another), so lovers can only maintain their freedom so long as they preserve the strictest courtesy towards each other. In this, his enchiridion for lovers, Patmore is full of practical wisdom. We have only to consider how much friction would be saved in family life, if relations were as careful of their manners with each other as they are to friends or strangers.

> Love's perfect blossom only blows
> Where noble manners veil defect.
> Angels may be familiar ; those
> Who err each other must respect.

He even pushes the point home :

> Not to unveil before the gaze
> Of an imperfect sympathy
> In aught we are, is the sweet praise
> And the main sum of modesty.

Our respect, even for those we love best, must be founded on a reserve, and we can only respect that reserve in others if we know that there are some sympathies which we cannot expect even a lover to share.

In watching her at a dance, the young man learnt that no one, least of all a lover, should

> fail by courtesies to observe
> The space which makes attraction felt.

The music to which they danced aroused his passion, and he feared that he betrayed it too openly. This is an eddy on the current of the stream.

The final canto of Book I., at which we have now arrived, is entitled ' The Abdication '. It is really a summarized analysis of the victorious strategy of a lover in the duel by which, in opposition to the practice of many of Shakespeare's heroines, the consent is wrung by the man from the woman. The woman's feelings while his pursuit of her continues are described in the following vivid passage :

> But who now meets her on her way ?
> Comes he as enemy or friend,
> Or both ? Her bosom seems to say,
> He cannot pass, and there an end.
> Whom does he love ? Does he confer
> His heart on worth that answers his ?
> Or is he come to worship her ?
> She fears, she hopes, she thinks he is !

Advancing stepless, quick, and still,
As in the grass a serpent glides,
He fascinates her fluttering will,
Then terrifies with dreadful strides.
At first, there's nothing to resist;
He fights with all the forms of peace:
He comes about her like a mist,
With subtle, swift, unseen increase;
And then, unlook'd for, strikes amain
Some stroke that frightens her to death,
And grows all harmlessness again,
Ere she can cry, or get her breath.
At times she stops, and stands at bay;
But he, in all more strong than she,
Subdues her with his pale dismay,
Or more admired audacity.

The second Prelude, which analyses the grief of one refused, is noteworthy for the comparison in which the persistence of love in the face of disappointment is described:

His fondness comes about his heart,
As milk comes when the babe is dead.

This prepares the way for a concluding epigram upon the main theme, which declares that the mark of the churl is to find his delight 'not in the woman but the chase'. The substance of the canto itself is simply Honoria's acceptance of her lover. The consequent change in the gust of his feelings is said to be that

Her soul, which late I loved to invest
With pity for my poor desert,
Buried its face within my breast,
Like a pet fawn by hunters hurt.

Patmore's determination to explore the whole ground of his subject can be judged by the fact that this climax concludes only the first quarter of the poem.

CHAPTER III

THE DATA OF EXPERIENCE (*continued*)

THE Prologue to the Second Book of *The Angel*, which continues the story when the hero has attained the object of his affections, reminds us that he is still only on the doorstep of delight. It is now supposed to be the tenth anniversary of Vaughan's wedding-day, which he celebrates by beginning, in the third person, the second half of his epic thus :

> Ten years to-day has she been his.
> He but begins to understand,
> He says, the dignity and bliss
> She gave him when she gave her hand.

We must remind ourselves here that this elation was not merely a sentimental one. It was the deeper initiation given by Time into the mystery, for which human love merely provided the rehearsal and the key, that explains this exultation. The harvest of study is reaped at last, but only, as students know, after they have incorporated the subject of their researches into the living tissue of their own minds. This transubstantiation Time alone can give by a slow process of mental metabolism,

and the fact that Time alone can give it excuses the emphasis with which a thinker or an artist is wont to say : ' My conclusions represent the experience of a lifetime '. To Patmore love was a mystery to which a lover must bind himself as an apprentice, in the manner of the mediæval craftsman before he was admitted into the ' mystery ' of a craft guild. To Patmore love was an art, to be studied no less carefully than that of Painting. The lover was the pupil ; marriage the formal indenture of apprenticeship ; ten years of matrimony but the accumulated firstfruits of practical experience. To him the lover entered upon a continuous and progressive series of duties and delights, the difficulty of which was an earnest of the value latent in them. Again, a lover, like a painter, must be patient if he would pierce the rough rind in which they lay concealed. With a stroke of ironic comedy, therefore, the Prelude concludes with the interruption of the poet by the inrush of his children carrying a hedgehog, which successfully confuses the meditative scene.

Before discussing the succeeding cantos at the leisure necessary to understand the emphasis which, for their symbolical value, Patmore loved to place upon familiar and neglected things, a remark should be made upon the framework of the story. It is perhaps simpler, while reading the poem, to neglect the myth of its supposed authorship. But there is a tendency to confusion in making the same person at once the hero and the supposed author of the poem. Writers, however, are careless in minor matters of construction. They are apt to begin by studying similitude. They often end by sacrificing

it to their own convenience. There are many examples. One, congenial to modern readers, is the clumsiness whereby so careful a writer as the late Samuel Butler made the story of the *Way of All Flesh* depend upon the supposed recollections of Overton, who, as an outsider, could not possibly have been familiar with the meditative and fantastic day-dreams to which Christina Pontifex was accustomed to abandon herself in moments of solitude and abstraction. Yet these mental soliloquies are among the best pieces of writing in an uncannily observant book. When we come to the second part of the epic, entitled 'The Victories of Love' we shall find that the married experiences of Vaughan and Honoria, which are taken for granted in the Prologues to *The Angel*, form much of the subject-matter of this succeeding book.

The opening Prelude to the first canto of Book II. contains one of the occasional references to war to be found in Patmore's writings. This has a certain topical interest at the present time (1917). He attributes the heroism of the average man, who has had probably little opportunity for its display in civil life, to

> The courage corporate that drags
> The coward to heroic death.

The desire to become a soldier in men who have never known anything but peace seems to depend first upon a love of adventure, and secondly upon the pugnacity which is the commonest latent quality of human beings. During the recent war a writer has noted this. Putting the question to himself, he wrote :

If I go ? The great adventure's waiting !
War, riskiest, most exhilarating
Of all man's sports, the sportsman has to-day :
Sport naked, pure, and bloody-fronted,
For man the Hunter—man the hunted,
Sport for the King of all the beasts of prey !

So detached an analysis of feeling does not suggest that he was a sportsman himself. As Patmore reminds us further on in this Prelude :

Who henceforth sings,
Must fledge his heavenly flight with more
Song-worthy and heroic things
Than hasty, home-destroying war.

The second, multiple epithet is an example of the pertinacity with which Patmore concentrated his attention on the theme which from first to last was supreme to him. He affirms that war is not a subject worthy of the epic muse because

men expect the Tale of Love,
And weary of the Tale of Hate.

This weariness is not confined to the silly hymn-writing of Germany.

The second Prelude consists of the criticism of Platonic love which we noticed on page 8 of the first Chapter. The third compares Orpheus, whose song rendered him immune to the singing of the sirens and eventually shamed them into silence, to the true erotic poet. The latter's sacred task, we read, is that of 'superseding faith by sight'. The poet's power of making others aware of feelings which they have forgotten after the sensation which occasioned them has passed stands in place of that personal faith which is wanting in those who do

not share his second sight. Faith incarnate himself, the Poet is endowed with that power which is the peculiar virtue of faith, the power, namely, of making evident, things not seen by hasty and inattentive observers.

The first canto, in its title ' Accepted ', resumes the story on the morning after Honoria had accepted Felix, who, whether in folly or because the period in which he lived is now nearly a century old, thought it prudent to make his first act the purchase of a pistol, to guard ' his now important ' life when riding backwards and forwards in the evenings to the Deanery. There is some detailed small-talk, on which it amuses me to insist, with Mrs. Fife the old servant, and his lady's sister, Mildred, before Honoria appears. Its irrelevant chaff, however, reminds us of the young man's impatience, to illustrate which it was no doubt deliberately introduced. He notes in one of Patmore's characteristic flashes that her loveliness ' rather lay in light than colour ', and the minor scene is over.

There is a fine Prelude to the second canto, which, under the title of ' The Changed Allegiance ', analyses the alternations of feeling in the woman as soon as she has announced her definite choice.

> Watch how a bird, that captived sings,
> The cage set open, first looks out,
> Yet fears the freedom of his wings,
> And now withdraws, and flits about,
> And now looks forth again ; until,
> Grown bold, he hops on stool and chair,
> And now attains the window-sill,
> And now confides himself to air.

The maiden so, from love's free sky
In chaste and prudent counsels caged,
But longing to be loosen'd by
Her suitor's faith declared and gaged,
When blest with that release desired,
First doubts if truly she is free,
Then pauses, restlessly retired,
Alarm'd at too much liberty;
But soon, remembering all her debt
To plighted passion, gets by rote
Her duty; says, 'I love him!' yet
The thought half chokes her in her throat.

This confession, this admission that the choice is made, that her boats are burnt, that it is too late now to waver, is the reaction from the tense excitement which is now a mood of the past. To have to admit this, to put it into words even for her own ear only, is an effort, and the words come

In joltings of the heart, as wine
Pour'd from a flask of narrow neck.

This is a good example of Patmore's minuteness of metaphor,[1] and of the power of the octosyllabic measure to stab impressions as with an acid on our minds.

Is he indeed her choice? She fears
Her Yes was rashly said, and shame,
Remorse, and ineffectual tears
Revolt from his conceded claim.

This reaction may be a commonplace of psychology, but it is doubtful whether its often cruel extent is recognized, except as a conventional observation in a novel or a text-book. Its cause was the sense that that which was done could not be undone;

[1] Not the less so that it is also found in Ariosto, as Dr. Richard Garnett pointed out in his book on Italian Literature.

that the step was irrevocable; that, instead of being the end of an adventure, it was the beginning of a life-long responsibility. No later event in the poem justified this foreboding, but it deserves its place as an initiation into the supreme relation of life.

This reaction, in turn, leads to another, and Honoria, after passing through it, has the courage to admit to herself the rightness of her choice, and, after this concession to accomplished fact, happily 'lets run the cables of reserve', and laughs at herself. Patmore again insists, in his characteristic way, that she loves her fiancé for his 'mastering air', for 'his power to do or guard from harm', even for his words which still 'instruct' although they imply the happy if two-edged compliment:

> How wise in all she ought to know,
> How ignorant of all beside!

She loves him, as the Christian should love God, because of his love for her; and, with what men call feminine blindness, she confesses to be surprised that her friends and relations have been so very dull to her natural possibilities! She goes over the household with amusing appraisement:

> Her parents' years excuse neglect,
> But all the rest are scarcely kind,
> And brothers grossly want respect.

The 'attention' of love has its reverse side in natural egoism. This which is the obvious topic of conversation among the spectators of the scene, is not slurred over by Patmore in his treatment. That her formal surrender is far from complete (which

time alone can make it) is well emphasized in the following quatrain :

> With her, as with a desperate town,
> Too weak to stand, too proud to treat,
> The conqueror, though the walls are down,
> Has still to capture street by street.

The Preludes reiterate the praise of Beauty which was implied in the Prelude to the tenth canto. We were then told that Wisdom must be ' glad as well as good '. Here we have the epigram :

> ' Beauty deludes.' O shaft well shot,
> To strike the mark's true opposite !
> That ugly good is scorn'd proves not
> 'Tis beauty lies, but lack of it.

A Jew was allowed to take even a slave to wife if she was fair. Beauty has been said to be the splendour of truth, and we recognize the truth by the splendid jewel upon its forehead.

The second canto describes a visit to the Deanery, in which Felix surprises his fiancée at the piano where she is playing (to herself) one of his own songs. Not wishing to take her at a disadvantage he reveals himself, whereupon she covers the situation by a speech which might have come from one of Meredith's heroines. Mimicking the accent and gesture of her aunt, Honoria scolds herself for having accepted Vaughan :

> ' To think of Vaughan ! You fool ! You know
> You might, with ordinary care,
> Ev'n yet be Lady Clitheroe.'

At the end of this speech Vaughan is left as naked of advantage as a cold potato, and Honoria's

improvisation contains a line which ought to have become a famous quotation. She ridicules his expectations in a phrase of which many in long lean years have learnt the truth :

> ' Rich aunts and uncles never die.'

In this encounter Honoria certainly carries off the honours, and concludes, as Lucy Feverel might have done, by imposing upon the lover the task of taking the aunt into dinner so as to

> ' Make her approve my love ; and win
> What thanks from me you choose to ask.'

Having converted the aunt, who enjoyed this tribute to her value as an ally, the young man goes home impatient at the year's delay imposed by the Dean. Inviting a snub, he turns back, although it is after midnight, and after having wrung from the amazed old man the concession that the date shall not be postponed beyond ' July ', he leaves the house, with a whispered announcement to Honoria, who has called to him from the stairs.

One subject now grows insistent, the art by which love may be properly preserved, so that it may escape the fate of a copper coin and not lose its colour with its currency. The secret is revealed in the Prelude to the third canto where with practical wisdom we are again warned :

> Keep your undrest, familiar style
> For strangers, but respect your friend,
> Her most, whose matrimonial smile
> Is and asks honour without end.
> 'Tis found, and needs it must so be,
> That life from love's allegiance flags,

When love forgets his majesty
In sloth's unceremonious rags.
Let love make home a gracious Court;
There let the world's rude, hasty ways
Be fashion'd to a loftier port,
And learn to bow and stand at gaze;
And let the sweet respective sphere
Of personal worship there obtain
Circumference for moving clear,
None treading on another's train.

. . . . . .

With whatsoever's lovely, know
It is not ours; stand off to see,
Or beauty's apparition so
Puts on invisibility.

Just as a child will say that 'at the rainbow's foot lies surely gold', and will be the more likely to miss the rainbow the more he hurries to take a nearer view, so the lover will have his eyes blinded to the beauty of his love if he does not respect her distance, and she his. That love must be circumspect even in its freshness, we are reminded in the description of the 'County Ball' which fills this canto. 'Well', as Felix remarks:

Well, Heaven be thanked my first-love fail'd,
As, Heaven be thank'd, our first-loves do!
Thought I, when Fanny past me sail'd,
Loved once, for what I never knew,
Unless for colouring in her talk,
When cheeks and merry mouth would show
Three roses on a single stalk,
The middle wanting room to blow.

She and others might be fit for heaven. Honoria was 'heaven itself', and her least and most transient action had 'an air of immortality'. This air, the

recognition of which is the awakening of love, made Patmore, as we have seen in earlier pages, dwell upon trifles which others pass by as unworthy of the muse. It is the aim of this string of quotations to show the ore with which they were laden for Patmore, and their symbolical significance for his philosophy. It is therefore necessary to linger upon the details of his epic, because these provide the data of experience, on the foundation of which that philosophy was built. It is perhaps not too much to hope that the reflections excited by the number already mentioned have justified their inclusion ; if only because the theme of which they are the incidents had never been explored so systematically before. The dance proves to the lover that innocence has a prerogative of gaiety, and when he sees that the observed of all observers is not his lady, he again reflects that the revelation of her beauty was uniquely proper to himself because 'love is like a ghost, and brooks only the chosen seer's eye'. Why then is the revelation so often afterward withdrawn in the familiar disillusion of married life? It is, we read in the essays, 'lest we should take it for our final good', whereas it is only the rehearsal in little of the relation of the soul to God, that divine love-affair for which the human counterpart is, on its own scale, the preparation, just as the 'first love' for Fanny was the preparation of attention ultimately to be fixed upon his true human mate Honoria. The lover's self-content, which borders on self-complacency, is compared to that of the Pharisee who congratulated himself that he differed from the many in the

peculiar grace of insight with which he was endowed. He meditates on his way home upon 'that splendid brow of chastity', of which we shall hear much anon, and, in a happy simile, on her 'guileless beauty', which is, he says:

> Pure as the permeating fires
> That smoulder in the opal's veins.

Patmore was the grandson of a jeweller, and in later life, when the fortune of his second wife and his own business aptitude in the management of the property enabled him to gratify his tastes, he became a collector, even a connoisseur, of precious stones. He loved, Mr. Champneys tells us in effect, not merely to handle the emerald, the pearl, and the diamond, but to test his eye for the first water of a gem by the standard of the market. This led him for a time not only to buy but also to sell jewels, which he probably appreciated in part for the symbolism which has always attached to them. There is one other metaphor, like this of the opal, which will bear quoting here, though it is to be found in *The Unknown Eros*.

> 'And when my arms are round your neck, like this,
> And I, as now,
> Melt like a golden ingot to your kiss'. . . .

Before I was familiar with his life the quality of this last line seemed to me to reveal a genuine passion for the precious metals. There is a metallic richness in it, a sense of touch (the primary sense), a glow, such as is given by the sight of a sovereign. Those debauched by it become misers; those obsessed by it become rich. The physical appetite

on which it is based is common enough to make the drawing of a cheque seem a smaller deprivation than a payment in sterling, though few of us, like Ibsen's Borkman, make it a master passion. Patmore only dallied with it, but it was sufficient to inspire these two metaphors which are fresh from the refiner's fire.

The interval before the wedding-day is used by Patmore, in the fourth canto, to return to the problem, which all experience offers, that the ardour of love is rarely retained, and that the feelings which women inspire in men are apt to be transitory. We have been already warned that when love loses its ceremony of respect it forfeits its prerogative. But is this forfeit to be laid wholly at the man's door? In the Prelude to this canto Patmore does not accept this view, but lays the blame largely on the woman. He says that she must 'require what 'tis our wealth to give', and adds severely:

> I, who in manhood's name at length
> With glad songs come to abdicate
> The gross regality of strength,
> Must yet in this thy praise abate,
> That, through thine erring humbleness
> And disregard of thy degree,
> Mainly, has man been so much less
> Than fits his fellowship with thee.

The extraordinary sanity of all this is worth emphasizing when we remember that it comes from a poet who more than any other has been supposed to take a sentimental view of women. The notion will not bear the test of proof. His worst offence in this sort is the title which he chose for *The Angel*,

but even here we must remember that he used the word 'angel' as a theologian and not as a sentimentalist. Woman was to him a divine messenger, but yet 'decidedly a little lower than the angels —those transmitters of divinity of which she is only the last reflector'. He did not forget her limitations.

> She is the 'glory' of his (*i.e.* man's) prowess and nobility in war, statesmanship, arts, invention, and manners; and she is able to fulfil this, her necessary and delightful function, just because she is herself nothing in battle, policy, poetry, discovery, or original intellectual or moral force of any kind.

We saw in the first Prelude to Canto XI. that she forfeited her prerogative when she overstepped her province of gentleness. Here we learn that she forfeits it also when she fails to respect the claims based upon it. Add to this the warning already given in the above Prelude that all feminine faults may be forgiven her, 'but none of man's'.

In later life he did not alter these opinions, but in the essay on 'The Weaker Vessel' *both* sexes are reminded that

> . . . a woman will consent to be small only when the man is great. . . . The widely extended impatience of women under the present condition of things is nothing but an unconscious protest against the diminished manliness of men.

This double warning aptly completes the general warnings of which this, to woman, in the Prelude to the fourth canto, is but one. The canto itself takes up the question from the man's side where he is forewarned by Love:

> The maiden will fulfil your hope
> Only as you fulfil your vow.

Still raw, the habit of love not yet acquired, the young man filled the difficult period of engagement with a reckless endeavour to prepare himself for a statesman's career by plunging into the study of 'ethics, politics, and laws'. This hardly seems the way to succeed as a modern politician. He had better have made social acquaintances with the wives of the Whips. Such resolutions, like the momentary mushroom, are proved to live no longer than the few short hours of a newspaper's life. So he drops Helvetius after half an hour, preferring to meditate on the power of women to excite a man's ambition. Perhaps Blackstone would be more congenial to his mood? Alas, the pages of the jurist served but to excite the reflection that the source of law is love, which 'like a king can do no wrong'. In despair he throws his books away, and prepares an address to the working men of Salisbury, in which he advises them to vote for the Tories on the ground that tradition is a better accredited guide than the enthusiasm of the hasty reformer. The attraction of Cowes Regatta, to which he is invited to escort the ladies, is irresistible and he sees, as Jephthah, who was not in love, did not, that foolish vows are made to be broken, not to be kept.

> Unless Love's toil has love for prize,
> (And then he's Hercules), above
> All other contrarieties
> Is labour contrary to love.

As idleness is the proper occupation of the poet,

so the soul, in the hibernating pre-nuptial period, is 'all indolently self-convolved, Cocoon'd in silken fancies sweet.'

The Prelude to the fifth canto is interesting because it recognizes, for the first time, a careless reader might suppose, that lovers do not always marry, and that sometimes when they do they marry amiss. To one who has been rejected, or supplanted, Patmore offers this consolation. Nothing, he says, goes wrong by rule, and belief that this world is so ordered should ease this load which crushes many people. That this is no pious evasion of the difficulty we may see by comparing it with this passage in *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*:

> God generally answers our prayers according rather to the measure of His own magnificence than to that of our asking; so that we often do not know His boons to be those for which we besought Him.

This each may test for himself by inquiring whether some previous disappointment has not led to unforeseen delights and opportunities which could not possibly have been predicted at the time when it occurred. In consequence of human vanity, however, in so applying it, we must remember the tendency which every man has to justify to himself his own past. Of that which he has, a man may be conscious. Of that which he has missed what can he know? We are warned therefore:

> Be not amazed at life; 'tis still
> The mode of God with His elect
> Their hopes exactly to fulfil,
> In times and ways they least expect.

One supplanted by another in a lover's affections

is told that, if the dogma of heaven's existence is not a lie, 'love in the end will meet his dues', though in the present it may fall short of them in unwilling celibacy, or worse in an unfortunate marriage. The art of maintaining love, the rules for which run like a refrain through this poem of courtship, consists in making attraction the warp and reverence the woof of married life. Without attraction there will hardly be marriage. If the attraction is to be maintained, mutual respect alone can retain it. To repeat, to insist, on that which is as little acted upon, as it is frequently proposed, may be pardoned in a poet who knew that wisdom lay in thoughts 'too simple and too sweet for words'. As the present writer has insisted elsewhere, 'A proverb, or a law of Nature, or a dogma, is the end of a very long process of thought; and proverbs are like offences in this, that it needs be that proverbs come, but woe to the man's fame by whom they come. It is an accident if his name survives. This, apparently, is History's acknowledgement of the fact that nobody seems able to learn wisdom from them.' If lovers, or less lucky people, knew the things with which they are familiar, the subject of *The Angel in the House* would have provided no motive for its writing. As it has become a classic, we need not waive away the exquisite platitudes which make it, together with the distinction of its style, the original and incomparable guide for lovers which it is. In an article published in the *Edinburgh Review* of October 1856, on the subject of 'New Poets', Patmore defends this principle as follows:

Poetry, so far as it relates to moral and intellectual truth, has the somewhat paradoxical recommendation of having to do mainly with truisms. The central thought about which the characters in each of Shakespeare's plays group themselves is some merest truism of morality; and all the greatest poets seem to have been equally partial to commonplace themes, as well in incident as in morality; for these reasons, among others, that moral truth is usually important in proportion to its triteness; that the poet is doing his noblest work in resuscitating mere truisms and conferring upon them perennial bloom and power. . . . He shows that, in such things, acknowledged and spoken of by all men, there are more and deeper meanings than may be freely expressed or comprehended by any man; 'somewhat', as Hooker says, 'which exceedeth the reach of sense'.

The canto, number five, which follows the practical poetic advice of these remarkable Preludes, describes a visit of the ladies to Felix's own home. His housekeeper's prattle is introduced because it falls in with his own reflections upon their departure, for he has gained a rich harvest by the sight of Honoria in the house which will soon be his and hers. He chews the cud of these delights:

> The grace I did not fully mark,
> The tone I had not heard before.

The excitation of expectancy given by Honoria's visit is distilled in a phrase which sums up the lover's impatience for the wedding,

> That unimaginable day
> Which farther seems the nearer 'tis.

'The Love-Letters' is the title of the first Prelude of the sixth canto, which opens with a fine exordium

likely to be welcome to readers who still find the excitements of another's love-making a dull and sorry business for themselves. It is or was a famous passage:

> How strange a thing a lover seems
> To animals that do not love!
> Lo, where he walks and talks in dreams,
> And flouts us with his Lady's glove;
> How foreign is the garb he wears;
> And how his great devotion mocks
> Our poor propriety, and scares
> The undevout with paradox!
> His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
> And great extremes of sweet and gall,
> And musing much on all that's fair,
> Grows witty and fantastical.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> He makes his sorrow, when there's none;
> His fancy blows both cold and hot;
> Next to the wish that she'll be won,
> His first hope is that she may not;
> He sues, yet deprecates consent;
> Would she be captured she must fly;
> She looks too happy and content,
> For whose least pleasure he would die.

The whole passage, in equally fine vein, would bear quotation too well to allow me to reproduce it, for if the reader is not enticed by a taste of honey to claim the comb, I, for one, will not spread his bread and butter for him. The analysis of love's perversity is pushed to the extreme, and if we analyse the whole passage we shall find, so apt is the metre to exposition, that it falls into a series of aphorisms each of which, like pearls upon a string, consists of a single white epigram of thought. Sometimes two metaphors are enclosed in one

quatrain, as a pearl will show two sides of different aspect or colour ; sometimes the lines like a game of shuttlecock toss a metaphor backward and forward with the complete skill of a virtuoso. This feat concludes with the less fantastic after-strain of the second Prelude where those who, like Samson, fall dupes to mere desire, are told that the punishment of habitual offenders will consist in the sight, one day, of themselves as they really are ; a punishment which does not err on the side of leniency. Indeed it will have the exceedingly keen edge of pain—'the sadness of all sin when looked at in the light of love' ; for the power to see ourselves, we are told, is the reward of purity only. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' who in making man in His own image gave to man the terrible power of seeing the divine in its degradation, as in the Apoxyomenos he might see it in its glory.

The charm of love-letters consists as much in the fanciful seriousness with which they profess to have foreseen and provided for remote dangers and disappointments as in the infatuated blindness to many realities close at hand which is invariably displayed between the lines. They are at once humble and withal self-confident ; extravagant, playful, astray in their concentration, and diffuse and diverse in their moods. The lover therefore fitly opens his with an extravagant reply to his lady's inevitable question :

> You ask, Will admiration halt,
> Should spots appear within my Sun ?
> Oh, how I wish I knew your fault,
> For Love's tired gaze to rest upon.

Whatever she decides to do and wishes him to share in doing, she need not fear for lack of support since there is no command that she can give which will not inspire capacity in him in equal measure. If faith, the power to make evident unseen things, can remove mountains, how much more can love, for what is love but the joy of the recognition which that faith confers? For 'her' to 'him' read throughout the soul to God, and you may note the significance of the symbolism of love on which Patmore dwelt because its language could reveal to us the larger relation. On this double significance he was to insist when he applied the symbolism of love-making to religion, to art, and to politics.

In the seventh canto of Book II. the fixity of marriage is said to be the secret of its joy, in the same sense that the limitations of each several art are the conditions, indeed the causes, of their several beauties. Patmore devoted an essay to 'The Point of Rest in Art', and explained that an even character in a tumultuous play, like Kent in *Lear*, or Horatio in *Hamlet*; a heel or a stump of a tree in a picture, the value of which was not apparent until the effect of its absence was considered; a recurring, and perhaps meaningless, refrain in a ballade, was, like the navel in the human body, 'the entire eye of its loveliness', because it provided the necessary point of rest to which all the surrounding activity of character, colour, or muscular rhythm was referred. If a ring upon a finger added to the animation of a hand, so the wedding ring, because it was a ring indeed, provided the point of rest, the settled pole or axis of love. The fact that he is hers and she

his, that the irrational preference of the one for the other is enforced by the external sanction which makes possession one of fact as well as of feeling, answers the question which runs like a refrain through the dialogue of the *Song of Songs*: 'Why is thy Beloved more than another Beloved that thou dost so charge us?' Even the inward grace requires the outward sign lest it should disbelieve the reality of its good fortune. Patmore constantly affirmed that an external sanction was necessary to assure men of the reality of that which they already knew. The Church, for instance, he said, was only the witness to a revelation which was made, in its degree, to all. He did not think therefore that even in a true marriage love could be its own security. On the other hand he cared little for the security given by law to a marriage which had no bond but that of the law itself. To him the marriage ring, because it imposed a duty, created a delight. The ring to the lover, like the rhyme to the poet, proved not a bond but the condition of freedom.

Next, proceeding to describe the delights of a May day, he speaks of the weariness of mere enumeration:

> Millions have meaning; after this
> Cyphers forget the integer.

This mood of overbrimming joy produces a reaction. If life can give so much to one in love, what can not death take away? The theme, perhaps because of its recurrence in the poet's own life, is a recurring one in Patmore. It presented him with two puzzles,

which he was at some pains to solve. The first, not hinted at in this passage of Canto VII., inquires whether a widower who marries again is unfaithful to his first wife. The later ode 'Tired Memory' is a poignant analysis of the transience of grief. It admits this to be a fact; and such 'infidelity', like death, is admitted to be a part of the necessary scheme of nature. Why not? the modern reader may inquire. Only that the alternative, 'a grief that is more than three years old is only a bad habit', is no more satisfying to us. The second puzzle with which Death confronted Patmore was its relation to his central theme. How could the importance of that theme be reconciled with the express statement: 'In Heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. They shall be as the angels of Heaven'? He refers to this statement several times. In the conclusion of *The Angel*, the Dean's fine 'Wedding Sermon', which sums up the philosophy of marriage in its human aspect, he says:

> You have heard
> Your bond death-sentenced by His Word.
> What, if, in heaven, the name be o'er,
> Because the thing is so much more?

The immediately succeeding lines, to which we shall have to return in considering the application of his philosophy to the order of society, must be here quoted because they show that the above solution was no evasion in words of the present difficulty but a serious attempt to solve it. The reason why marriage is superseded in Heaven is thus explained:

All are, 'tis writ, as angels there,
Nor male, nor female. Each a stair
In the hierarchical ascent
Of active and recipient
Affections, what if all are both
By turn, as they themselves betroth
To adoring what is next above,
Or serving what's below their love?

The succeeding lines affirm that full understanding of the matrimonial symbol is reserved for those who do not place their immediate hope in opposition to God's promise, which is rather its fulfilment than its prolongation. Just as the hope of the flower is fulfilled in the fruit, not in the perdurability of the flower's own beauty, so the hope of matrimony will be fulfilled in the new relation for which it was the proper rehearsal. That new relation has been described in the account of the angelical ladder, and the hierarchical ascent of angels upon it. These are neither male nor female, but since sex itself is merely an aspect, their sex varies with their relation to the spirit immediately above, or below, them in the divine hierarchy. The truth to seize, he insists, is rather the 'solid ground' of matrimony from which the ultimate relation will spring. This will prove more profitable than to concern ourselves with 'the cloudy cant' of spiritual aspirations, which are the favourite device of the Powers of Darkness and the Air, for by its means they can engender a false contempt for 'materiality'. Spirit, we are told, not only is 'heavy nature's wing', but itself 'nothing' without that 'burden'. The earth, which is the only ground of our hopes, should be therefore the chief ground of our study.

According to Patmore, as we have seen, disregard of this was the weakness of the Platonic philosophy of love. In short, the fact of marriage will persist between each soul and God, for all are womanhood to Him, though its form and name which were the rehearsal only will be transcended.

The theme of regret, which led to this excursion, is developed in Canto VII. with Patmore's customary analysis : its small sting no less than its principal wound. ' The household troubles ' which it brings, the taking thought for trifles from which the husband had been spared, these are the pricks against which the widower must hourly stumble. They are the edge, and the wardens of his grief, which regrets for small delinquencies and casual inconsiderate-nesses will serve in their turn to magnify.

In the Prelude to the eighth canto Patmore hazards the bold assertion that feminine capricious-ness is the woman's response to the same quality in her husband, and that if he is constant in duty she will be steady as a star. That which lifts her life and gives meaning to it is ' a rapture of sub-mission ', the delight of which consists in the fact that this, her duty, is that which makes her pleasing to her husband. The art of proving so, of retaining his affection, is a conscious secret with her now, though the mode by which his love at first was won, where, as in this poem, both are fresh and unsullied by experience, was originally instinctive. The con-scious art of retention is thus described :

> Without his knowledge he was won ;
> Against his nature kept devout ;

She'll never tell him how 'twas done,
And he will never find it out.
If, sudden, he suspects her wiles,
And hears her forging chain and trap,
And looks, she sits in simple smiles,
Her two hands lying in her lap.

Her secret is shared only by the poet, in virtue of his possession of the qualities of either sex : the 'masculine' intellect and the 'feminine' sensitiveness to feeling. After confessing that love sees by second sight, and therefore knows not whether it chooses or is elected by its lover, the Preludes end with an amusing epigram :

'I saw you take his kiss!' 'Tis true.'
'O, modesty!' 'Twas strictly kept:
'He thought me asleep; at least, I knew
'He thought I thought he thought I slept.'

The following (eighth) canto is a dissertation on the theory, a fact of observation, that a woman is like a Koh-i-noor and mounts to the price which is put on her by her lover. The previous assertion, that courtesy is the preservative of love, is here, as it were, repeated in the minor.

The future evolution of Love is the theme of the Prelude to Canto IX., where the growth of 'manners' which Love has occasioned since the rude wooing of the savage, by way of the dominating passion of Siegfried, the 'dainty wiles' of Chloe, and the dignity of Portia, are rapidly summarized to suggest the exciting question :

Shall Love, where last I leave him, halt?
Nay; none can fancy or foresee
To how strange bliss may time exalt
This nursling of civility.

Love is the theme of themes then, not only because it is a 'rehearsal' for a higher communion, nor because in itself it may be a great delight, and the simple key to the universe. Its excellence also rests upon an historical achievement: it is the cause of civilization, the very occasion of manners. We may remember that George Meredith declared that a social equality of the sexes was necessary to the existence of comedy which was the spark struck out by the two sexes freely interacting upon each other. 'There was fun in Bagdad.' There was wit at Versailles. Comedy proper is ultimately a Christian product, since manners are its province and the drawing-room its natural scene. It is a 'romantic', not a 'classic' art. As colour is to drawing that laughter is to mind. Comedy is the colour of intellect. Love which has produced comedy and manners is a proved 'nursling of civility'. What other arts and civilities it will yet invent we know not, but the potentiality of love is only equal to the 'infinite variety of woman'. Infinite indeed since it is the product of unreason, which will make her to the end of time as odd as 'a foreign land' to men. Some men deny this variety and this charm. The flirtatious or inveterate bachelor is disappointed because

> 'The bliss which woman's charms bespeak,
> 'I've sought in many, found in none!'
> 'In many 'tis in vain you seek
> 'What can be found in only one.'

The inveterate bachelor is fated, perhaps luckily, to be born blind to it, for his blindness will simplify

his life. The philanderer's tactics doom him to disappointment from the first. The succeeding canto, IX., is chiefly remarkable for noting the supersession of friendship by love and for a couple of lines which a careless reader might be excused for passing by. Woman, we are told, 'is both Heaven and the way', a phrase which would sound rhetorical were it not the subject of a careful aphorism in *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*:

> The obligatory dogmata of the Church are only the seeds of life. The splendid flowers and the delicious fruits are all in the corollaries, which few, besides the Saints, pay any attention to. Heaven becomes very intelligible and attractive when it is discerned to be—Woman.

That woman is the last reflection of the divine we have already heard, and that it is her power of making evident to man truths which he would miss without the mirror of her body we have seen also. How then is she Heaven itself? In a later aphorism of the same collection Heaven is defined to be 'the synthesis of absolute content and infinite desire'. This might almost stand for a definition of love. This passion aroused in the sexes is, we have seen, the revelation of the divine. Woman in arousing it in man is its reflection. She is therefore Heaven to him. So understood (or thus revealed) she is the means of more intimate initiations, and as the economists teach that, in the last analysis, supply and demand are seen to be indistinguishable, so in woman, in the light of this philosophy, the path to Heaven merges at last into the land to which it leads. This explanation, which cannot, I think, be

accused of subtlety, is given here partly to show that Patmore's casual ejaculations are proper to his main theme, but partly too because this aphorism on woman (No. LXXII. of the 'Aurea Dicta') has been called by a critic a typical example of the 'hard sayings' of which Patmore was fond in his later years. If it is seen to be congruous with his general scheme of thought, we shall be induced to treat with less disrespect other apparently no less fantastic utterances.

The Prelude to the tenth canto returns to the subject of 'Frost in Harvest', and notes again how often 'the halo leaves the sacred head' after marriage. It is noteworthy that the only excuse which, Patmore suggests, is sufficient to justify this eclipse is a foolish choice on the part of the woman. It is not suggested that a man ever makes a foolish choice, or that if he did, it would excuse a consequent indifference. I take this to be no romantic worship of woman, but a tribute rather to the predominance, and consequently to the responsibility, of the masculine sex, which, since it has the preeminence, has no less, in Patmore's view, the power to realize the promise of matrimony. To live greatly, we read in the course of the canto itself, is to acquire 'unknown capacities of joy'. Hence the man who makes a hasty choice (if indeed the primal simplicity of passion does not far transcend the cold limitations of prudence), though he may not acquire the particular joy which he proposed, will acquire others of no less worth. At this point Nature is invoked to provide 'A Demonstration' that 'in the arithmetic of life, the smallest unit is a

pair'. Therefore if the man confesses that he loves Heaven more than his wife, it is not because he loves her less, but because he and she are parts of one whole, which derives its own centre from God. The limit imposed by marriage, to refer to an epigram already quoted, imparts to it the same variety which the limits of the several arts provide in their unceasing surprises of beauty. This 'Demonstration' is the central axiom of all Patmore's philosophy, and cannot be meditated too carefully by those who fancy that *The Angel* is after all nothing but a love-story. Such a story would not have inspired Patmore's muse unless he held it to be but the nearest illustration of a dual principle which lay at the root of all being. The axiom, in full, is stated thus:

> Nature, with endless being rife,
> Parts each thing into 'him' and 'her',
> And, in the arithmetic of life,
> The smallest unit is a pair.

The eleventh canto describes the wedding. With his customary minuteness of observation Patmore notes that the ostensible crisis of the ceremony was not the real crisis of love, for

> vowing then the mutual vow,
> The tongue spoke, but intention slept.
> 'Tis well for us Heaven asks not how
> We take this oath, but how 'tis kept.

Afterward the Dean gives to the new bridegroom a parting word of advice:

> 'She's yours; but I love more than yet
> 'You can; such fondness only wakes

'When time has raised the heart above
'The prejudice of youth, which makes
'Beauty conditional to love.
'Prepare to meet the weak alarms
'Of novel nearness: recollect
'The eye which magnifies her charms
'Is microscopic for defect.'

'Her strength is your esteem,' the old man adds; 'the death of nuptial joy is sloth'; lastly, remember never to disuse the ceremony of love, nor mitigate the reverence which she once inspired in you.

In the last canto, entitled 'Husband and Wife', the Prelude warns the married lover that he has gained not the fee simple of her heart and body but only the right to explore them. After his marriage, as before, every winning, he is told, must be preceded by a wooing. This piece of advice has lately been made the text of a popular book on marriage by Dr. Marie Stopes. The titles of matrimony are only courtesy titles. They derive their virtue indeed from this very fact. His wooing therefore has but now begun. He is free of the outer court merely, because the inner is 'sacred to Heaven', and the woman herself 'is not, and never can be', his. There is always something elusive in human love, because it is only the shadow of the relation to the recognition of which it exists to lead mankind. The Prelude concludes with the assertion that the paradox of love lies in this: it is the only appetite which does not die in the moment of its gratification.

The last canto itself lifts the curtain for a moment on the first few days of the honeymoon. The husband did not realize the measure of his pos-

session until he had been called to make the first payment on his wife's behalf. A cynic would have made the same point. Patmore introduced it, no doubt, because he generally conceded to the cynic accuracy of observation ; that which he denied to him was any profound understanding of the fact observed. After all, the cynic and the poet represent two ways of looking at the same things. The gulf between an ox and an oyster is no greater. The husband and wife have gone to Hastings, where Patmore spent his own first honeymoon at the Green's Hotel which is mentioned in the poem. The story ends with their visit to a warship on which they find Frederick Graham, Honoria's cousin, who with more than the magnanimity of a rejected lover entertains them both, and leads Felix to wonder whether he would have behaved so well in the like case. On their return the two, hardly yet used to their new estate, pretend, like children, to be still unconfessed lovers. This touch is typical of Patmore, who, with true insight into this subject, never let slip an opportunity to show

> How light the touches are that kiss
> The music from the chords of life !

The poem ends with an epilogue, in which Vaughan's wife expresses some brief criticisms on his poem, and he, taking an image from the fire, declares that of the flames of love

> The more they burn the less they show,
> The clouds no longer smirch the sky,
> And then the flames intensest glow
> When far-off watchers think they die.

The poet then, from the rich experience of many years, discommends girlhood. The ten-years' wife, he says, is one whose customary love is neither a mood of play or passion, but the inter-tissued habit of her life. Compared with hers the charms of girlhood are no more 'than apples green with apples gold'. On this return to the main theme, the poem abruptly ends.

CHAPTER IV

RAMIFICATIONS

Bound up with *The Angel in the House*, and indeed in continuation of it, is a poem of similar length entitled *The Victories of Love*. It consists of a series of letters in verse from the characters introduced into *The Angel*, and describes the incidents which happen to them after (in the main) the marriage of Felix and Honoria. The metre is altered from the octosyllabic quatrain to the octosyllabic couplet, a change possibly more suited to the familiar epistolary style, but not in itself an improvement. If *The Angel* is a poem of courtship, *The Victories* is mainly a poem of married life. The letters which compose it may be a convenient method of introducing diverse characters and points of view, but the form has no intrinsic merit. It is disjointed, is apt to confuse the reader, and from the romances of Smollett to the present day is uninviting in itself. Its oblique method relieves us of the necessity for telling the story of this poem, which was necessary in the case of *The Angel*, for there is little significance for Patmore's philosophy in the succession of events which occasion the sentiments

described in the letters. They are, however, ramifications of the main theme, which forms a delta in the lives of the various characters in the story. All that we need to do is to note such thoughts as the letters contain in illustration of Patmore's contention that nuptial love is the key to the enigmas of the universe, and that the relation of lovers after, as before, marriage is prototypical of the relation of the soul to God. At the same time *The Victories* is a complete poem in itself, and deals not merely with the relation of love after marriage but with a marriage not so fortunate as that of Felix and Honoria. These now pass to the background, and the poem describes the marriage of Frederick and Jane, whose difficulties provide a contrast to the complete happiness of the former pair. By this means Patmore was able to cover the ground not touched upon in *The Angel*, and to show that his philosophy was equal to the less fortunate aspect of the subject. The complete epic gains much in substance from the second half of the poem, and the theme is coloured by the contrast of the two stories which cross one another in its course.

The detachment of the thoughts from the letters may be prefaced with the remark that many of them come from the hand of Frederick Graham, Honoria's cousin. Since he was unsuccessful in his suit of Honoria, he offers a contrast to Felix, and is introduced to show that love has gifts even for those who seem most disappointed of them.

The memory of his love for Honoria is the memory of the Revelation which Patmore declared first love always to be, and so we find Frederick compared to

the strange waif that comes to run
A few days flaming near the sun,
And carries back, through boundless night,
Its lessening memory of light.

He is a sailor by profession, and there is a vivid description of the dreary half of naval life. In a mood of depression before starting for another cruise, he says:

I dread,
As strange, the life I long have led;
And as, when first I went to school,
And found the horror of a rule
Which only ask'd to be obey'd,
I lay and wept, of dawn afraid,
And thought, with bursting heart, of one
Who, from her little, wayward son,
Required obedience, but above
Obedience still regarded love. . . .

He contrasts the discipleship of love with the rule of Service discipline, which, with an exquisite thrust, is said to have the peculiar power to make 'light duties burdens'. Discipline itself is the 'awe which is not reverence'. He consoles himself with the belief that pure desires are prophecies, and that God will not deceive His creature though He may choose another vessel than that proposed for his delight. The sea itself is a symbol of loneliness. The very seasons hardly seem to touch it. The sailor notes its blank contrast with the land

Where Spring, that goes not out to sea,
Lay laughing in her lovely glee;

a fine point characteristic of Patmore's observation.

His mother, in reply, tries to console him by remarking that 'love pays dearly for success', if

only because human hearts cannot well sustain the habit of 'attention'. We must not look for complete satisfaction among human pleasures, which are only the precursors of the eternal delight which attaches to divine things. Beside, his mother adds, he could not offer to Honoria the life and style to which she was accustomed, and

> All are poor who come to miss
> Their custom, though a crown be this.

Disappointment leads him to marry Jane, the Chaplain's daughter, a piece of news which provokes an elfish letter from Lady Clitheroe to her sister Mary Churchill. This letter shows that Patmore had the gift of characterization, and could make a woman talk. Lady Clitheroe, like one of Meredith's fine ladies, enlarges on the art of managing men. The two rules for wives which she lays down are simple. The first is to study the colours which their husbands like. The second is not to let men know 'the reason why they love us'! These rules Lady Clitheroe illustrates in detail. The marriage at all events is not easy at first for Jane. She is appalled by the correctness of her husband, of whose grave eyes she is afraid, since she is aware that they have seen many things to which she is a stranger. His politeness to her seems aloof and cold; his very tenderness a concession. Jane is human enough, however, not to accept all the blame for this. Frederick, she feels, though above her in some things—the fine shades, for example—is a great baby compared to her in others. She feels in him a masculine slowness of thought, rather than an

instinct to act well, which seems stupid, as perhaps it is, to women who, whether they do well or ill, are apt to act impulsively. Their first child, unveiling to him the mother in his wife, brought them together. The man, who was alarmed by the sight of his child, saw in her instinctive affection for it a gift, a power, pre-eminently hers; for the moment when we learn to respect another's quality, admiration or love is quickly evoked. Jane therefore happily confesses to her mother-in-law that there is a new bond of union:

> Also, there's something now, you see,
> On which we talk, and quite agree;
> On which, without pride too, I can
> Hope I'm as wise as any man.

But her husband is clever in directions where she is not, and she lifts the curtain a little on their differences. In her own home dress had been rather an expenditure to be deplored than one of the happy graces of life. So when she casually decries the admiral's wife for spending two hours daily at her dressing-table, her husband gravely replies that 'all things deck themselves which wed', and startles her piety with the reminder that not only was dress originally ordained by Heaven, but that Rebecca, the King's Daughter in the Psalms, and the Good Wife in the Book of Proverbs (to say nothing of the extravagances of Jezebel, Aholah, and Aholibah!) all cultivated the art of dress with the care of a Parisian. This is naturally a little overwhelming to her provinciality, but where the baby's clothes are concerned she knows that she holds her own. She even grows accustomed to sit quiet in the evenings while her husband reads or

smokes in silence; and if the husband is dull, the baby which has now come, unlike its father, obviously needs her.

These very human details, which are the tissue of married life, have not been thought unworthy of the novelist, but they have been rejected by the poets, chiefly perhaps because poets have generally been young men, or, like Shelley, married men of bachelor habit, though we are familiar with a theory of the poetic which would exclude them. Since love has its 'sparkling humilities' no less than its ecstasies, the recognition of these in poetry is like the distant cottage lamp in a landscape, a friendly beauty which has its human right in the picture. As Felix remarks in a letter to his wife:

> Did not mere Earth hold fast the string
> Of this celestial soaring thing,
> So measure and make sensitive,
> And still, to the nerves, nice notice give
> Of each minutest increment
> Of such interminable ascent,
> The heart would lose all count, and beat
> Unconscious of a height so sweet,
> And the spirit-pursuing senses strain
> Their steps on the starry track in vain!

This reminds us of Patmore's criticism of Plato. When we come to the thin mountain air of *The Unknown Eros*, we shall remember with gratitude and confidence how firmly the poet and the philosopher had previously set his feet upon the earth.

Passing over the description of the storm and the meeting of Jane with Honoria, which fill the last two letters of the first book of *The Victories of Love*, we recur to the theme of regret, and

the analysis of grief, which form the chief subject of Book II., and without which no epic upon love could claim completeness. Jane, who has lost two children, is again drawn closer to her husband by their deaths, as she was first by their arrival, and finds her reward in

> Signs of his love, which pleased her more
> Than all the proofs he gave before.

In her own weakness she has learnt to see her hold upon her husband's affection, just as the needs of her baby are its chief attraction to herself. Thus she adds:

> And in his strength have I such rest
> As when the baby on my breast
> Finds what it knows not how to seek,
> And, very happy, very weak,
> Lies, only knowing all is well,
> Pillow'd on kindness palpable.

The banter of Lady Clitheroe and her character sketch of Jane at the Hurst must be passed over in this connection, though the picture of aristocratic life, as Patmore saw it, has its value in respect to the political theory which also sprang from his philosophy of love. For instance, it was in no spirit of elegant trifling that he wrote

> For alms let poor men poorly give
> The meat whereby men's bodies live;
> But they of wealth are stewards wise
> Whose graces are their charities.

In this atmosphere Jane caught something of its grace, for, treated as part of it, she became so. Do we not all return in the main the treatment which is meted out to us, and if we are too ready to

answer the fool according to his folly, hardly less quickly respond to the degree of honour which we receive? It might be thought that to see his wife beside Honoria, whom he failed to win, in the latter's own house, would strain Frederick's regard for poor Jane. It does not do so, for a reason which Frederick thus explains to his mother. He says that he loves Honoria still,

> But she alone was loved of old;
> Now love is twain, nay, manifold;
> For, somehow, he whose daily life
> Adjusts itself to one true wife,
> Grows to a nuptial, near degree
> With all that's fair and womanly.
> Therefore, as more than friends, we met,
> Without constraint, without regret;
> The wedded yoke that each had donn'd
> Seeming a sanction, not a bond.

Nothing can be unconditional, but conditions create the freedom which they bound. One of the conditions of love is to live under sentence of death, and when that sentence is executed, death 'restores the focus' which first love gave and makes the bereaved see the beloved person once again in the original light. This is the theme of the fifth letter of the second Book, a beautiful meditation upon death, and the light which it restores to the complementary Revelation of love. In the seventh letter, left to be read by her husband after her own impending death, Jane alludes to the ever-pressing subject of the permanence or impermanence of marriage in a future life. She will not be content with anything but a direct affirmation. Her attitude therefore is, to this extent, an explaining away.

In view of the importance of this question to Patmore's philosophy of love, her argument deserves full quotation, and the reader can easily judge for himself how far it is a dramatic utterance, and how little it really modifies the attitude expressed by Patmore in his own person in preceding passages, and, through the mouth of the Dean, in the concluding summary of the final ' Wedding Sermon ', to which allusion already has been made. The final explanation seems to be that given in the opening paragraph of Chapter VIII., which the essays corroborate. But here the arguments oppose the view that, when the soul is confronted at last with Love himself to whom every soul is woman, the semblance of Love in this life will be exchanged for the reality. Jane protests, and her protest is the more in character because it is not decisive:

> Are we not one flesh, yea, so far
> More than the babe and mother are,
> That sons are bid mothers to leave
> And to their wives alone to cleave,
> ' For *they* two are one flesh ' ? But 'tis
> In the flesh we rise. Our union is,
> You know 'tis said, ' great mystery '.
> Great mockery, it appears to me ;
> Poor image of the spousal bond
> Of Christ and Church, if loosed beyond
> This life !—'Gainst which, and much more yet,
> There's not a single word to set.
> The speech to the scoffing Sadducee
> Is not in point to you and me ;
> For how could Christ have taught such clods
> That Cæsar's things are also God's ?

Having settled the main question to her own tender satisfaction in this way, Jane proceeds in

Letter VIII. to arm her husband against the smaller regrets which her death will occasion. She is as simple as she is wise. The following lines, denying that he must ever accuse himself of past unkindness even in little things, are as poignant as anything in Patmore:

> It's natural
> For one like Mr. Vaughan to come,
> From a morning's useful pastime, home,
> And greet, with such a courteous zest,
> His handsome wife, still newly dress'd,
> As if a Bird of Paradise
> Should daily change her plumage thrice.
> He's always well, she's always gay.
> Of course! But he who toils all day,
> And comes home hungry, tired, or cold,
> And feels 'twould do him good to scold
> His wife a little, let him trust
> Her love, and say the things he must,
> Till sooth'd in mind by meat and rest.
> If, after that, she's well caress'd,
> And told how good she is, to bear
> His humour, fortune makes it fair.
> Women like men to be like men;
> That is, at least, just now and then.

The glance of Ibsen is not more piercing than this. Where else have the sense of fact and its right proportion, which Poetry gives to simple things, been more exquisitely combined? Natural objects have been observed by Rossetti in this fierce light of imagination, too often fantastically. It has been left to Patmore to etch the common experience of life in lines like these, which, to use his own phrase for Rossetti's kindred power of describing external objects, 'seem scratched with an adamantine pen upon a slab of agate'. His poem is full of similar

passages, as previous quotations will have shown, but they attain his own standard of 'fine things', in that, unlike some of Rossetti's, 'their independent value appears only when they are separated from their context'.

She also instructs her husband in the art of grief: how to pay its dues and to accept the term which life sooner or later will set:

> Would you, indeed, have memory stay
> In the heart, lock up and put away
> Relics and likenesses and all
> Musings, which waste what they recall.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Yet, after all, by nature's course,
> Feeling must lose its edge and force. . . .
> Grieve with the heart; let not the head
> Grieve on, when grief of heart is dead;
> For all the powers of life defy
> A superstitious constancy.

Is not this the final answer to Jane's reasons? If she could recommend him sincerely to marry again, was not she acquiescing in the mortality of love? Her acquiescence in fact gives a human sanction to the death sentence passed upon love in the words to the Sadducee, which troubled her. And that married love can occur more than once in a man's life, and the second occurrence be recommended by the dying heroine of the first, proves that this love is the semblance, and not the reality, which it mirrors. She concludes by reminding him that 'a man is not a young man twice', and that she will have in his youthful love a possession of which nothing can deprive her, least of all a successor if one should chance to come.

After Jane Graham's death a new praise of matrimony is found in the familiar fact that the maiden aunts feel an interior difficulty upon the occasion of the marriage of their nieces. Whether the right be waived or not, the married niece now has the precedence, and the perhaps intimate relation of the elder and the younger woman is interrupted.

> Somehow, all loves, however fond,
> Prove lieges of the nuptial bond;
> And she who dares at this to scoff,
> Finds all the rest in time drop off;
> While marriage, like a mushroom-ring,
> Spreads its sure circle every Spring.

On his marriage a man leaves not only his father and his mother but his friends, and it was natural for a bachelor to complain that 'marriage and death and division make barren our lives'. To affirm, in the light of experience, that friendships can persist after marriage is like affirming, in view of the declaration to the Sadducee, that marriage will endure in Heaven. For if 'all loves are lieges of the nuptial bond', the form of love which is called friendship must necessarily take a second place. In practice it does so and is hedged and fenced around with so many barriers to free intercourse that friendship after marriage lives rather by sufferance than of right, and at best is enjoyed in intervals only. This side of the matter did not trouble Patmore. He has hardly a good word for friendship in his writings, and his life was remarkable for the broken friendships which marked its passage. There were few famous men in literature or art of

his own period with whom he was not at one time or another closely intimate. Not one of these friendships survived. That with Tennyson ended with bitterness; that with Ruskin in disillusion; from Browning, Carlyle, and Rossetti he drifted apart. In almost every case friendship began with admiration and ended in critical coldness. The one apparent exception is Patmore's friendship with Frederick Greenwood, but this was not so much an intimacy of thought and feeling as a tempered alliance for common ends, since in the pages of the *St. James's Gazette*, which Mr. Greenwood edited, Patmore found fairly free scope for the expression of his ideas. Patmore generally passed from discipleship to criticism, and was too dictatorial by nature to fill for long any other position than that of head, a position which is more proper to a husband than a friend. Patmore, as we know, was three times married. So at the end of *The Angel* he had written:

> Friendship means well, but misses reach,
> And wearies in its best delight
> Ver'd with the vanities of speech.

It was not then of friendship that Patmore was thinking when he made Frederick declare in the tenth letter:

> All I am sure of heaven is this:
> Howe'er the mode, I shall not miss
> One true delight which I have known.

This seems to accept the view that 'the mode' of marriage in Heaven would be different from its prototype. The friend, the bachelor, the one title

suggests the other, has no explicit place in Patmore's philosophy, though, as we shall see in the final chapter, the philosophy was better than its author in this respect. He could hardly imagine a man unmarried; only when celibacy was a feminine caprice did he consider it. So Mary Churchill's apology, which forms the subject of Letter XI., is thoroughly apologetic and bases itself on a confession of 'infirmity' and 'ignorance', which were too pronounced to admit two loyalties. We notice at once the contrast of this confession of weakness with the proud claim which the ecclesiastic, the contemplative or the scholar, has made for the undivided life of celibacy. It may or may not be a mere coincidence, but Patmore's respect for the priestly office was equalled only by his dislike, and indeed contempt, for most secular priests. To be in Holy Orders in itself was no passport to his regard, but rather the reverse. Certain definite causes of complaint, the action, for example, of the priests of the church which he built at Hastings in raising a mortgage upon the building in disregard of a verbal undertaking not to do so, hardly suffice, I think, to explain this aversion. Rather his instinctive suspicion of the bachelor, even of a man devoted to a single life through the priesthood, caught eagerly at any and every excuse to justify an antipathy which was instinctive. The bachelor outside a monastery was the unnatural man to Patmore; the spinster, more mildly treated because of her sex, a somewhat pathetic object. In this he was indulging a prejudice, which is noteworthy because it contrasts so strangely with his repeated

praise of the monastic and conventual life, his regard for many contemplatives, and his respect for nuns. But celibates who were not regulars, spinsters who were not nuns, formed a class which was hardly within the range of his sympathy, though, as in the case of friendship, there is nothing in his philosophy itself to condemn them. It is useless to reason with a prejudice. We can say only that the single or celibate state was uncongenial to Patmore except when the reason for its choice was the claim of the contemplative life.

In spite of the thirteenth letter, which closes *The Victories of Love*, the natural conclusion of the poem is the twelfth. In this Felix, the supposed author, writes to his wife his final reflections in a kind of poetic epilogue. The thirteenth, from Lady Clitheroe to her niece Emily Graham on the occasion of the latter's honeymoon, contains a woman's analysis of masculine ways of thought and feeling, and seems less to conclude the whole narrative (save for the philosophic summary of the final 'Wedding Sermon') than to remind us that two further books were contemplated but never actually composed. It seems proper therefore to take the thirteenth letter first.

The principle on which is based all Lady Clitheroe's advice to the young bride is Patmore's favourite theme: 'Between unequals sweet is equal love'. In contrasting man and woman, she says:

> The follies natural to each
> Surpass the other's moral reach.

The perpetual strangeness of the one to the other

constitutes the perpetual charm: particularly, we read, the charm of the woman for the man. Woman indeed is to cultivate stratagem, and the easiness with which man can be deceived is complementary to her own instinct to excite his wonder. When a woman 'loves at all' she 'loves always'; man, 'who loves far more, loves yet by fits', and no wife will be troubled by this 'waywardness' once she knows that it is 'natural'. The elder woman reminds her correspondent that newly married people are only 'unripe fruit', and that age 'has romance almost as sweet and much more generous' than theirs. Whether by way of a lesson in humility or not I do not know, but the letter ends with the surprising statement that

> In marriage, be it still confess'd,
> There's little merit at the best,

because, it seems, the half-dozen lives which are provided for 'as the price of antedated Paradise' are little compared to 'varied wants' supplied by the aunt who devoted her single life to them. This passage, I think, is merely an introduction to the 'Wedding Sermon', which the aunt asks Lady Clitheroe to enclose. We shall see in a moment that this amply serves to correct any impression of dissatisfaction with the state of matrimony which might linger did the epic close upon these lines.

To return to the twelfth letter, which completes the relation of the latter years of Felix with Honoria: the final data of experience on which the philosophy of the 'Wedding Sermon' is built. Felix confesses that his poem in praise of marriage

never could be finish'd; nor
Will ever Poet utter more
Of love than I did, watching well
To lure to speech the unspeakable!
'Why, having won her, do I woo?'
That final strain to the last height flew
Of written joy.

After twenty years of marriage, he longs to say 'some words superfluously sweet of fresh assurance'. He confesses, as Patmore himself could rightly do, that

I was fashion'd with a mind
Seeming for this great gift design'd,
So naturally it moved above
All sordid contraries of love,

that it learnt how 'intimacy of love is naught without pure reverence'. The husband therefore remains the constant wooer still. As the interpreter of love, his wife became Love itself to him. His desire for love grew with that which it fed upon. The 'fading rose' is the fairer for that fading, and

frailty which can weight the arm
To lean with thrice its girlish charm,

is as beautiful as an autumn day which ponders 'the far-off majesty of death' too peacefully to have any taint or suggestion of decay. In age, they had learnt together that the mildness of mature love is the ease of complete mastery.

That joy's most high and distant mood
Is lost, not found, in dancing blood.

He passes then from metaphor and reflection to illustration, and the letter gives two pictures: the one of how his birthday was kept, the other of his

wife's recovery from an illness. Exquisite as either is, they are introduced to show the heights of love of which he speaks. At moments like these a white light pours into human lives, which touches them to an ecstatic tranquillity. These, the last of many pictures of love, have led him to hope that

> yet, ere wrath or rot destroy
> Of England's state the ruin fair,
> Oh, might I so its charm declare,
> That, in new Lands, in far-off years,
> Delighted he should cry that hears :
> 'Great is the Land that somewhat best
> 'Works, to the wonder of the rest !
> 'We, in our day, have better done
> 'This thing or that than any one ;
> 'And who but, still admiring, sees
> 'How excellent for images
> 'Was Greece, for laws how wise was Rome ;
> 'But read this Poet, and say if home
> 'And private love did e'er so smile
> 'As in that ancient English isle ! '

That Patmore is the only poet who has thought domestic love 'worthy of a serious song' may be the accident of genius; that he was, even in his few years of uncertain popularity, never accorded more than the position of a minor shows how great is the gulf between public sincerity and public morals. Otherwise it would be strange that the one poet of England, of home, and of beauty whom we have, notwithstanding the art with which he praised them, is still a bad second in the public regard even to the minor singers of their opposites, and that, in subject no less than in form, Shelley or Blake or Swinburne can win the admiration of thousands for their complex or vague desires,

whereas he who was the Laureate of all that Englishmen profess to admire still numbers but a small minority of readers ; so strange in the ear of a modern Englishman sounds the praise of those simplicities in which he professes all the beauty of religion and social order to be involved.

CHAPTER V

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARRIAGE

In the 'Wedding Sermon' on which the epic closes, will be found not merely a summary of the philosophy of marriage, which had been intertissued with the love-story of the preceding poem, but hints of the transcendental heights to which it was to be carried later. It is therefore at once the conclusion of the epic, and the forerunner of the later odes; in sum, the middle point of rest to which either the epic or the odes, when considered separately, must be referred. As such, it must be analysed briefly.

The truths of love are happily compared to the sea for their combined qualities of 'mystery' and of 'clearness'. First love, the preacher (who is of course the Dean) remarks, is a revelation of divine truth, but the untempered youthful heart has small power to hold that revelation in continuous and unobscured possession. For this reason the promise of love may be broken in the letter though it is often kept in the spirit later on. All loves spring from God and return to Him. Vice is passion in disorder: Virtue passion flowing in its proper course. This distinction should be

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contrasted with the metaphor wherein Plato compared the soul to a charioteer in charge of a pair of ill-matched horses. Patmore shows an advance on Plato in regarding good and evil, not as two opposed forces, but as one original energy which is evil when it is disordered and good when it is directed to its proper aim. Patmore's view has the doubtful advantage of being in momentary favour, for, if Bergson's philosophy could be condensed into a single phrase, the epigram would run :

Mind downhill : Matter uphill : Life gravity.

Love, the Dean continues, is always either ' desire ' or ' benevolence '. God claims all desire. He asks of us benevolence according to our capacity, and happy are they who do not tire in their worship on the one hand nor grow cold in the performance of their duties to others. To attain such perfection is not for every one, but those who find in themselves an interior aridity of soul, or who grow perfunctory in the performance of external duties, must not be discouraged : we are to do that which we can, and not unduly overstrain our natural capacity. There is no lack of opportunity. The ' poor ' are those who want any good thing which we can give, and the ' simple keys ' to what are called ' mysteries ' by faith are ' the loves of husband, wife, child, mother, and father '. Of all human loves that of marriage is supreme and the most perfect, though even married love is not so exalted as ' the love which considers Heaven with single eye ' alone.

It should perhaps be pointed out that there is no necessary contradiction in these two statements.

The perfect married lover is he whose devotion to God is single-hearted, though, unlike the contemplative, he arrives at it through the aid of human love. In fact such single-heartedness alone would make him the perfect husband, the man, that is to say, who, to take a phrase from *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*, meets the unequal claims of the Divine and the human with equal duty.

In nuptial love, the two factors of love, namely, 'benevolence' and 'desire', are 'equally' and 'entirely' fused: self-sacrifice and self-seeking are both exalted by it. In fact it is rich enough to blend these opposites in such complete harmony that it becomes impossible to distinguish one from the other. Moreover, 'God's love' chiefly abides in marriage, and nowhere else so 'sensitively.' The reason of this is clear. Each is all of the Godhead that the other is able to 'comprehend' or to 'contain'; so the estate of holy matrimony may be compared to a prosperous polity in which every parcel of land is cultivated and fenced about by a private proprietor. Far from being narrowed by this private ownership, the 'infinite' of man is contained in it. All things have their natural limit. Those which seek to overpass their boundaries lose their character, just as a brook which overflows its banks becomes not the wide sea of its hopes, but the 'morass' of its degeneration.

Human love, however, would never have 'dared to dream of its own worth', had it not been for divine sanction. We must remember that

> Christ's marriage with the Church is more,
> My children, than a metaphor.

Here it seems proper to insert St. Paul's own words from the close of the Fifth Chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians :

> Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church : for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery : but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife *even as himself* ; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

That Patmore had this pronouncement vividly in mind is apparent from a later passage, where he says that the ' finish'd lover ' can

> Serve without selfishness, and love
> ' Even as himself ', in sense above
> Niggard ' as much ',

a gloss which, I think, illuminates the latent foison of a phrase which use and wont have almost reduced to the level of a commonplace. Without this divine sanction the soul would despair, but now it rejoices in the ' heaven of heavens ' of which Christ's marriage is at once the symbol and the fact. But this is a matter of the height, and heights are difficult to scale. Indeed the ' best delights ' even of the ' homeliest passion ' are rarely experienced, and in those who have attained to them create a remorseful

home-sickness for the ultimate union of the soul with God which the best delights of nuptial love are seen to predicate.

The 'innermost nuptial sweetness' of love is found in 'the doctrine of virginity'. For instance, did lovers incontinently gratify their passion, they would destroy the bliss at which they aim, for joy is the reward of the obedience of love to a higher law which imposes its restraint upon the eagerness of the senses. The 'perpetual yearnings' of the senses, however, serve a sovereign purpose, namely, to provide a perennial 'sacrifice' to be placed upon the altar of true love. The frantic hoofs of desire trample that which it seeks; its revulsions are no less a loss of love than is its frenzy. Both, by overthrowing the order of love, 'pervert the ineffable delight of service', which has two rewards in the 'full sight' attained at one moment and in the 'pathos of a hopeless want' experienced at another. Unbridled lust achieves only the pride of an 'unreal victory' and the corresponding remorse at an 'unreal defeat'. The doctrine of virginity contains the condition of 'nuptial blessing', and provides against the opposite extravagance of coldness. For the 'true being of virginity subsists' where its 'outward form' is lacking, in the perpetual seeking of *another's* joy. Thus the goal of virginity is nuptial sweetness; and virgin lives are rewarded in

> finding in degrees unknown
> That which in act they shunn'd, their own.

All 'delights of earthly love' are but 'shadows' of the heavens, and, like all shadows, they fly from

him who pursues them, but in turn pursue the feet of him who is content not to make them the immediate object of his search. As Patmore says in *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower :*

> Plato's cave of shadows is the most profound and simple statement of the relation of the natural to the spiritual life ever made. Men stand with their backs to the Sun, and they take the shadows cast by it upon the walls of their cavern for realities. . . . If we want fruition we must turn our backs on the shadows, and gaze on their realities in God.

The wisdom of love consists then not in ' high aspirations ', but rather in the ' sweet and regular use ' of the good in ourselves. ' Nature ' and ' Grace ' should step together and respond to each other's call like the answering echo of two rhymes. Nature is far stronger than any ' uncongenial ' law, and a ' right life ' is known by its gladness. Duty grows into delight, because that which we must do, once accomplished, brings in its train unforeseen delights, of which the sense of duty done is the least and the prelude only. The practical rule for lovers then is to make the measure of their achieved delight the test of their morality, for though God's law may be disobeyed, no satisfaction results from disobedience. The pleasures of ' love ' ' take their vigour from control ', just as the pleasure of verse consists in the perfection of its obedience to the laws of rhyme and metre ; and since in love there can be no true pleasures which are not mutual, there is a law of morality for lovers here. In his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* Havelock Ellis has emphasized the same point, for he remarks ' that

the morality of passion depends upon the fact that its expression must provide the satisfaction not of one party but of both', and this satisfaction of a mutual need is the check and the safeguard against selfishness. In a more recent volume upon *Married Love*, Dr. Marie Stopes made this rule the centre of elaborate deductions which were examined with considerable insight and subtlety. Once a man, Patmore continues, obeys 'the indispensable first precepts of the Church', the Church not only allows, but bids him leave for his wife at times even the 'extreme sense' of God's 'immaculate law'; for God smiles to see His children 'play' in freedom, and discerns His fullest praise in the 'exuberant liberty' of those who, understanding the sacramental nature of marriage, enjoy 'love's innocent gladness' with 'untroubled heart' in the faith that this gladness is a portion of eternal delight and one of the many mansions in the house of their Father.

At the time of their marriage, lovers are but 'unwrought material of love', whose fashioning only 'time and a right life' can bring to perfection. In fact, a characteristic point in Patmore's philosophy, the 'bond of law' often evokes love, whereas love without bonds rarely submits to be restrained from its 'ruinous self-liberty'. This belief in the value of law is obviously related to Patmore's later statement in *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower:*

> Love is a recent discovery and requires a new law. Easy divorce is the vulgar solution. The true solution is some unimagined security for true marriage.

Love in youth stands in need of the support of law

in order to keep the vows of lovers inviolate amid the early ' panic fears ' which beset its ' wayward ' path with doubt, mistrust, and uncertainty. Lovers marry without ' pretence of insight or experience ', but this instinctive attraction is a surer guide than the calculations of prudence. The instinct is really a trust in super-rational and divine guidance, and God, if asked, blesses this ' ignorance ' and ' blind election '. Indeed, if a girl is a ' true woman ', and a young man in his bachelor days has been ' loyal to his future wife ', choice does not greatly matter. Instinct is the most trustworthy guide. ' Former folly ' poisons love, for the penalty of illicit love is

> To mock some good that, gain'd, keeps still
> The taint of the rejected ill.

The lover must also remember that his wife is the prophecy or reflection of some good beyond herself. Were this borne in mind, the cause of much nuptial misunderstanding would disappear. For the inner truth of the matter is simple. Love ' rebels ' against the living woman because she is the semblance and not the Reality itself. Forgetfulness that either party is the semblance only may disturb the ' happiest pact ' ; and from this forgetfulness arises the need for a law to control the two during the reaction of disappointment. The situation which ensues can be met only by the negative rule : ' leave ill alone '. A man must not try to ' mend his wife '. Her own instincts at this crisis are a better guide than his ideas. In the depths of her nature she ' knows what he desires ' better than he, and with zeal and wit aspires towards it. The

only help which he can give to her is his trust. He must therefore overlook ' all in which love's promise falls short of full performance ', and behave as if that which love works at unceasingly were already realized.

Our best good can claim honour as the ' pedigree of future perfection ' only. To deny honour because it has not been fully earned would rob the woman of the mould in which good intention runs into achievement. Honour is the prop of human ' sensibilities ', which respond to the degree of honour which they receive, as, for instance, Jane did in the great house where her husband's cousins treated her as one of themselves. Where such honour is paid, and wisdom observed in common things, a husband in the long run will not be disappointed. This wisdom will tell him not to degrade love by over-familiarity, nor to demean it by bad manners, nor to chill affection by uxoriousness. For it is part of this wisdom to remember that a woman can only half love a man who has no other interest than herself. That husband is safest who relies on time, on her instinctive wisdom, on their mutual work, on the bond of common troubles and delights, and

> On pleasures that so childish be
> They're shamed to let the children see.

These ' sparkling humilities ', again to use Ruskin's phrase, which the heart rather than the head remembers, with the children who are the chief bond of all, being indeed fully as much ' for love ' as love is for themselves, give to nuptial love such a

cluster of flying buttresses as no other love can claim. Children are the first purpose of matrimony, and, like the ' sleeping centre ' of the wheel, transmit energy to the whole circle of family life. In the presence of this energy we see that Love itself, not the family, is its own noblest offspring, and love transmutes even original sin to blessings innumerable. In the last analysis, though the procreation of children is the first of the three ' causes ' for which the sacrament of marriage was ordained, love, not the family, is the ' end ' for which it was created.

While the home life unfolds, the active mind of man should not disturb the natural process. During it the wife will grow so proper to her husband that love's initial waywardness will gather in familiar intercourse with her such accumulated insight that at last other women will be admired in the light which from his wife irradiates her whole sex and indeed humanity generally.

It is true that ' love's youth ' does not return, but that first ardour becomes transcended by another, which will no more breed regret for the loss of that first phase than the sight of her nestlings will cause a sparrow to mourn the clutch of five eggs which her young brood has broken. The fruit of love does not wholly attain the ' spiritual hope ' from which it was born. The best of love is ' service ', and even devout service is dulled by use, because the ' home of love ' is not on earth, and the suggestion of pathos in love is love's imperishable sigh after its true home in eternity. Therefore let us be glad if the joy of love has taught us to give

praise to God, for this praise is 'the end of mortal happiness'. With this on our lips we may be well content to wait the fulfilment of love in heaven. Then comes the passage which we have already quoted:

> What if, in heaven, the name be o'er
> Because the thing is so much more?

The angels, the reader will remember, are neither male nor female; what, since sex is but an aspect, if 'all are both', feminine to those above them in the hierarchical ascent toward God, and masculine to those below: 'adoration' and 'service' succeeding each other as the soul looks upward in adoration or bends downward to minister?

We are fashioned here for eternity, and must beware lest we learn God's truth by half. The ground of love is in this life, and because its roots are deep in the earth love is fitted for the 'flight of angels'. To those roots let us hold fast, or the eventual flight will be impossible for us. Our wings must not 'miss the weight which made them soar'. Spirit is nothing without the weight of matter; matter itself is 'at least a maggot', and Psyche, the soul—that is, the maggot with its later development of butterfly wings—is a source of honour and delight the higher it then soars into the heavens.

The sermon closes with a word to those who have never experienced 'a month's romance'. First love is 'glorious for light' when it occurs, but in the light of it 'worldly things' assume proportions as grotesque as those shadows which at noon or evening are dwarfed or magnified by the sun.

That few ' marry whom they would ' is ' good, like all God's laws ' ; which in turn ordain that a ' true man ' is ' well wived ' whose wife is womanly, as a true man's wife ' is sure to be '. To the ordinary man such a woman is the ' likelier wife ' if she is not ' the joy of all eyes '. If her husband can remember some one more charming whom he failed to win, let him learn (as Frederick Graham did) that ' God's ordinance ' is mightier even than the graces of beauty, and will, if the man is ' just and kind ', reward him with a great discovery. He will find that ' the body's bond ' surpasses every other force ' in power to actualise ' the union which it sanctions. This bond can indeed even ' deck a wife in form and face '. The plastic graces are not the only forms of beauty. The insight which, in the soul of Rembrandt, saw beauty in age and wrinkles, is the gift of this sacrament to a husband. Man and not ' Nature ' is to be blamed if ' five years ' have not sufficed to reveal the inner beauty of his wife to him.

At this point I cannot resist interpolating the advice which Madame Necker, once Gibbon's fiancée, addressed to him in many after years :

> Le mariage qui rend heureux dans l'âge mûr, c'est celui qui fut contracté dans la jeunesse. Alors seulement la réunion est parfaite, les goûts se communiquent, les sentimens se répandent, les idées deviennent communes, les facultés intellectuelles se modèlent mutuellement. Toute la vie est double, et toute la vie est une prolongation de la jeunesse ; car les impressions de l'âme commandent aux yeux, et la beauté qui n'est plus conserve encore son empire.

Madame Necker was no genius, and her observa-

tions illustrate Patmore's favourite thesis, that spiritual truths differ from others in their capacity for infinite corroboration, and are profound because of their simplicity.

Married love, he continues, like the sun, ' makes beauty abound ' on whatever object it shines habitually. Lastly, for the more fortunate, ' the vision in one of womanhood ', where it has once been seen, is present honour and future joy. But this vision does not attach to all women, for all men do not receive it. It is not a necessary prologue to marriage, but where it occurs, who would be content to miss that vision, which can concentrate the glory of the whole of womanhood in one ?

It has not been a grateful task to the present writer to summarize in prose the thought which dances so lightly on the wings of Patmore's verse. No reader familiar with the ' Sermon ' will be able to read the foregoing *précis* without impatience, but the task had to be attempted if Patmore's philosophy was to be co-ordinated here. The verse has fallen largely on deaf ears, and, in a prosaic age, philosophy is supposed to be more suited to prose than to poetry. Suspect in poetry, the medium proper to philosophy, for in poetry alone can thought be perfectly assimilated to language and become the manner of the idea from which it springs, a statement in prose may be able to hold the scattered attention of an audience for whom the strain of listening to the primary simplicities is too severe. And the primary simplicities are the province of Poetry. ' Wisdom must be glad as well as good ', and we who are mostly impatient of that

gladness, mistaking imagination for fancy, and metre for a troublesome convention which obscures the meaning (whereas, in skilled hands, it doubles its force), prefer to see ideas in the form of a system, which it is the aim of prose to give. Therefore, though prose is a system of logical statement, whereas poetry achieves the higher system of form, the vehicle of prose must be attempted when poetry, as in the case of Patmore, has failed to secure attention for his ideas. It is not as a champion of their truth that the present writer ventures to present them, so much as one who, having seen in them a profoundly simple philosophy with a more than common appeal to the affections and experience of men, desires to present that philosophy for independent consideration. In making the attempt, he is conscious that an immense price will have been paid. The content of poetry is inseparable from its form, and the supposed precision of a prose statement of poetic ideas is gained really by the sacrifice of their quality. Whatever of these ideas prose cannot capture will be the main part of their value, but that which remains is perhaps sufficient to lead to their consideration, and may tempt a few readers to turn to the fountain-head from which they are drawn. Rationalists, who may not be so tempted, but are perhaps ready to think a prose statement of philosophy sufficient, may be referred to the Poet Laureate's recent utterance,[1] which is written in their phraseology and, deliberately recognizing their assumption that definiteness can be better attained in prose, confesses that ' it is difficult

[1] *The Necessity of Poetry*, by Robert Bridges, 1918, Clarendon Press.

to quiet a suspicion that the natural indefinite quality of our ideas may be a healthy condition ; and that the key to the mysteries of life, which is withheld from philosophical exactitudes, may lie in that very condition of our thought which Reason rejects as unseizable and delusive '.

It is, after all, those who do *not* share this suspicion that I must now attempt to reach, since Patmore's art has failed to gain the attention, even of professed lovers of poetry, for the idea that made him a poet.

CHAPTER VI

THE ORDER OF THE ODE

The art of the Odes, however, has compelled the admiration of all, and it is commonly said by the criticasters that the original poetry of Patmore is confined to the rare, ecstatic verse of *The Unknown Eros*. The art of the Odes is a technical matter, to which the following chapter is briefly devoted. Readers, therefore, who take no interest in the technique of poetry are invited to pass to the next, wherein the thread of the Patmorean philosophy is resumed.

What is an ode? Briefly, it is a set piece on a single exalted theme, to which tradition loosely assigned a certain form in English as in Greek poetry. This form of the English Ode was never defined with exactness till the time of Congreve, who wrote a brief and matchless little discourse upon it. Since his *Discourse on the Pindarique Ode* is little known and well worth knowing; since, further, it treats, with becoming brevity, not only the origin of the Ode but its history in English poetry, I will append the following extracts. They are taken from volume iii. of Congreve's collected Works, published by Jacob Tonson in 1710.

There is nothing more frequent among us, than a sort of poems intituled Pindarique Odes; pretending to be written in imitation of the manner and style of Pindar, and yet I do not know that there is to this day extant in our language, one ode contriv'd after his Model. . . . The character of these late Pindariques, is, a bundle of rambling incoherent thoughts, express'd in a like parcel of irregular stanzas, which also consist of such another complication of disproportion'd, uncertain and perplex'd verses and rhimes. . . .

There is nothing more regular than the Odes of Pindar, both as to the exact observation of the measures and numbers of his stanzas and verses, and the perpetual coherence of his thoughts. . . .

The liberty which he took in his numbers, and which has been so misunderstood and misapply'd by his pretended imitators, was only in varying the stanzas in different Odes; but in each particular ode they are ever correspondent one to another in their turns, and according to the Order of the Ode.

All the Odes of Pindar which remain to us, are Songs of Triumph, Victory or Success in the Grecian Games; They were sung by a chorus, and adapted to the lyre and pipe; they consisted oftnest of three stanzas, the first was called the strophe, from the version or circular motion of the singers in that stanza from the right hand to the left. The second stanza was call'd the antistrophe, from the contra version of the chorus; the singers, in performing that, turning from the left hand to the right, contrary always to their motion in the strophe. The third stanza was called the Epode (it may be as being the after-song), which they sung in the middle, neither turning to one hand nor the other. What was the origin of these different motions and stations in singing their odes, is not our present business to enquire. . . .

The method observ'd in the composition of these Odes, was therefore as follows. The Poet having made choice of a certain number of verses to constitute his strophe or first stanza, was oblig'd to observe the same in his antistrophe,

or second stanza ; and which accordingly perpetually agreed whenever repeated, both in number of verses and quantity of feet : He was then again at liberty, to make a new choice for his third stanza, or epode ; where, accordingly, he diversify'd his numbers as his ear or fancy led him ; composing that stanza of more or fewer verses than the former, and those verses of different measures and quantities, for the greater variety of harmony, and entertainment of the ear.

But then this Epode being thus formed, he was strictly obliged to the same measure, as often as he should repeat it in the order of his Ode, so that every Epode in the same Ode is eternally the same in measure and quantity, in respect to itself ; as is also every strophe and antistrophe, in respect to each other.

The lyric poet Stesichorus . . . was, if not the inventor of this order of the Ode, yet so strict an observer of it in his compositions, that the Three Stanzas of Stesichorus became a common proverb to express a thing universally known, *ne tria quidem Stesichori nosti* ; so that when any one had a mind to reproach another with excessive ignorance, he could not do it more effectually than by telling him 'he did not so much as know the Three Stanzas of Stesichorus' ; that is, did not know that one Ode ought to consist of a strophe, an antistrophe, and an Epode. If this was such a mark of ignorance among them, I am sure we have been pretty long liable to the same reproof ; I mean in respect of our imitations of the odes of Pindar. . . .

Again, we having no Chorus to sing our Odes, the titles, as well as the use of Strophe, Antistrophe and Epode, are obsolete and impertinent : And certainly there may be very good English Odes, without the distinction of Greek appellations to their stanzas. That I have mentioned 'em here, and observ'd the order of 'em in the ensuing Ode, is therefore only the more intelligibly to explain the extraordinary regularity of the composition of those Odes, which have been represented to us hitherto, as the most confused structures in Nature.

However, though there be no necessity that our Triumphal

Odes should consist of the Three afore mentioned stanzas ; yet if the reader can observe that the great variation of the numbers in the Third stanza (call it Epode, or what you please) has a pleasing effect in the Ode, and makes him return to the first and second stanzas, with more appetite, than he could do if always cloyed with the same quantities and measures, I can not see why some use may not be made of Pindar's example, to the great improvement of the English Ode. There is certainly a pleasure in beholding anything that has art and difficulty in the contrivance ; especially, if it appears so carefully executed, that the difficulty does not shew itself, 'till it is sought for ; and that the seeming easiness of the work, first sets us upon the enquiry. Nothing can be called Beautiful without Proportion. When symmetry and harmony are wanting, neither the eye nor the ear can be pleased. Therefore certainly Poetry, which includes painting and music, should not be destitute of 'em ; and of all Poetry, especially the Ode, whose end and essence is harmony.

Mr. Cowley . . . there is that great deference due to his memory . . . that I think nothing should be objected to the latitude he has taken in his Pindarique Odes . . . yet I must beg leave to add, that I believe those irregular Odes of Mr. Cowley, may have been the principal, though innocent occasion, of so many deformed poems since, which instead of being true pictures of Pindar, have (to use the Italian painters term) been only caricaturas of him, resemblances that for the most part have been either horrid or ridiculous.

For my own part I frankly own my error, in having heretofore miscalled a few irregular stanzas as a Pindarique Ode ; and possibly, if others, who have been under the same mistake, would ingenuously confess the truth, they might own, that never having consulted Pindar himself, they took all his irregularity upon trust. . . .

In the light of this important introduction to the subject, those who wish to turn from its theory to its practice cannot do better than to study the

volume published by Edmund Gosse in 1881 under the title of *English Odes*, or to the selection entitled *Great Odes* in the 'Canterbury Poets', published by Walter Scott. The remarks which Mr. Gosse prefixed to his agreeable anthology embroider the structural analysis of the Ode which Congreve described so lucidly; and the selection which follows upon them exemplifies the development of the Ode from Spenser to Patmore and to Swinburne. It is apparent at once that its original form and structure have been generally ignored or abandoned, and that the term Ode has now little, if any, reference to form, but refers rather to the type of subject chosen, and to the sustained, if varied, treatment expected from the Odic poet. Mr. Gosse expresses the opinion of many, that no structure can be assigned to Patmore's Odes, which seem to depend entirely upon the exquisite ear of their author; but his ear is so fine that, it is evident, lawlessness is the one term which cannot justly be applied to them. In what degree Patmore had a pattern for his Odes we should not be in a position fully to judge until we had analysed his learned study of 'English Metrical Law'. That analysis is foreign to our scheme, and not to overburden ourselves with anacruses, catalexis, tribrachs, and the terminology of metrists, it suffices here to repeat two remarks upon the Odes which he included in a preface to *The Unknown Eros*. First, Patmore believed that all English verse depended largely upon the pause, which was a positive and not a negative condition of its beauty; and he urged that no line could be measured metrically unless the pauses were noted

no less carefully than the beats, and considered in relation to the unaccented syllables. Consequently no line, least of all in his Odes, can be measured merely by the number of its syllables. Its length must be measured by the speaking voice which marks the pauses, not by the written word which omits them ; for the voice and the ear have a notation which no compositor has ever attempted to represent, even approximately. Secondly, in answer to the charge of lawlessness, he pointed out that the freedom to rhyme at irregular intervals, which is made full use of in the Odes, was counterbalanced by the insistent recurrence of the same rhyme throughout. This should be enough to convince the most casual reader that the Odes have an Order, a metrical law, and are not to be classed as *vers libre*, the pride of which is to be wholly capricious.

The following simple remarks may be added. As we shall see later on, though most of the Odes are upon mystical subjects, the thread which binds them is the metre which Patmore called ' catalectic ' because, in the words of his preface to *The Unknown Eros*, it employs ' the pause (as it does the rhyme) with freedom '. He also described the metre as the ' free tetrameter ', because the ' long lines have the time of eight iambics ', and the shorter lines, which occur irregularly, ' the time of six or four '. It should be noted here that this irregularity, which is a subtlety and not a licence, encourages compression ; for those line-endings in hexameters or blank verse which merely occur to fill the measure and are not themselves ' rifts loaded with poetic ore ', do not exist in

these odes, since they are not forced upon the poet by his metre. Consequently in the Patmorean Ode the standard is tightened : no superfluous word is provided with an excuse for existence ; but the metre rises or falls with the intensity or lapse of emotion. Such transitions as are necessary are accomplished in the shortest space, and with the fewest syllables, and are the chief use to which the short lines are put. In narrative poetry, and some of the Odes partake of narrative, where poetic blanks have to be filled, the short line comes to the rescue, and provides by its variety and brevity a form of transition which is a welcome check upon rhetoric or padding. The few passages of dialogue which occur in the Odes are wonderfully vivid, and make the reader understand what was in Patmore's mind when he expressed the wish that plays had been written in this measure. The metre, however, so far as I know, has never been put to dramatic use.

Mr. Page makes the interesting suggestion that the metre of the Odes was 'forecast as early as 1857, when, writing of "English Metrical Critics" (as again of Swinburne in the '80's), Patmore complained that an elaborate stanza-form, which happened to fit the opening thought, was allowed to govern the whole poem'. Mr. Page thinks that it was because Patmore objected to such stanzas that he followed the advice given by Coleridge to the young Tennyson, to write for a time in simple measures only. Personally, I think Patmore was hardly free to choose, because at first his ear was faulty, and therefore he resolved to discipline himself by a simple measure in the hope that when he had achieved a mastery

of it he might be able to invent a new form. This in the end he did, but the new form was a lineal descendant of the old, and not an invention of a different order. Moreover, he had always been interested in the great English Odes, but these provided him with models for which he had little personal aptitude. His problem, therefore, was to adapt the metre which he had mastered to the ode form. The result was a true invention, and to appreciate its originality we should know the types of ode which it succeeded. These can be best understood by tracing the ode through Cowley and Congreve.

Mr. Arthur Symons, to whom every morsel of a great mind in letters is sacred, said justly of Patmore that he was 'a poet of one idea and of one metre'. This clue to the structure of the Odes, superficially different from that of the metre of *The Angel*, is enforced by a scrap which he has preserved among the brief notes which Patmore wrote to him. Referring to 'the differing characters of the metres of *The Angel* and *Eros*', Patmore said that 'in one case the meats and wines are served on the deal table of the octosyllabic quatrain, and, in the other, they are spread upon the fine, irregular rock of the free tetrameter'. But we have only to recall the passage already quoted, wherein he says that the long lines of the 'free tetrameter have the time of eight iambics' and the shorter lines 'the time of six or four', to see that the metre of *The Angel* and *The Unknown Eros* is the same, except that in the former it is divided into quatrains, while in the latter it flows, in spite of some marked pauses, without division

into stanzas. Both poems are written in the iambic measure. The superficial change is merely from an extreme length of the equivalent of eight syllables to an extreme length of the equivalent of sixteen. That which is called the measure, which has the time of two iambics, is the basis of both. In the latter, however, the pause becomes more apparently a positive element in each line; and because the tetrameter is 'free', and not conditioned by stanzas, the transitions follow the emotion unencumbered by the exigencies of logically formal verse. In Patmore's hands, then, the new vehicle of his poetry became even more obedient to his poetic impulse than it had been when the supports of the octosyllabic quatrain were always at hand to prop the impulse should it hesitate or falter. Only one who had been thoroughly schooled in the strict scheme of such a simple, if formal measure, could be so disciplined as to be free to throw away the supports by reliance on which he had gained his mastery. It will be noticed that the English writers who most favour *vers libre* are those for whom even the octosyllabic quatrain seems too difficult to accomplish perfectly. For the art of verse is a learned art, which is better studied in the strict school of Mr. Robert Bridges, than in the vagaries of those who cover, under the convenient cloak of 'inspiration', unformed emotions in formless words. Though, on occasion, their ears can be superior to their learning, their weakness is that their successes are lucky flukes which cannot be intelligently repeated, or varied. The successes are lost in the mass of loose or feeble lines which have the writers com-

pletely at their mercy. Sloth is no more a qualification for a poet than for any other artist. He can dispense with a formal technique only when he has acquired one. Patmore, as his essay on 'English Metrical Law' remains to show, was a learned metrist, and well knew what he was about. Consequently there is in the Odes, for all their 'freedom', a trade-finish which was the reward of the apprenticeship of a lifetime to technique. Hence his 'invention', and the even quality of his work. Finally, the change which has transformed the original rhythm is the aptest possible comment on the change which has transformed the original thought.

Patmore's first essays in this metre were printed privately in 1868 in a volume usually referred to as the *Nine Odes*. These, eventually scattered about *The Unknown Eros*, were, to give them their later titles, the following :

Ode 1. Prophets who cannot sing.
2. Beata.
3. Tired Memory.
4. Faint yet Pursuing.
5. Pain.
6. The Two Deserts.
7. Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore.
8. Dead Language.
9. 1867.

The only changes made, apart from the pointing, occur in that poignant piece of autobiography, 'Tired Memory'. From the original version the concluding twenty-three lines have been omitted, and the passage following the line, near the centre of the poem, 'O my most Dear', has been altered.

The effect of the changes (and no one who shares my aversion to variorum readings will wish for more than a record of them and their effect) is somewhat to soften the charges against himself for marrying again. Logically Patmore saw no escape from the charge of 'treachery' to the memory of his first wife; but he had already noted in *The Angel* that all the powers of life defy a *superstitious constancy*, and come to recognize that life sometimes has a short way with logic. Consequently his experience endorsed the 'death sentence' passed on the marriage bond. In the end he married again, not once but twice.

The volume known as *The Unknown Eros*, consists of a proem, and two Books: Book I., which contains twenty-four Odes on various subjects; Book II., which contains eighteen Odes on mystical subjects only, and a final section called 'Amelia, etcetera'. In this last are two poems, 'Regina Coeli' and 'The Open Secret', which again are mystical. There seems no obvious reason for the exclusion of the 'Amelia' poems from Book I., nor for the separation of the two later-placed mystical odes from Book II. Though they radiate from a common centre, the thread which binds all the poems is the metre; and mystical philosophy, political theory, narrative, dialogue are severally found. The ode then, even as he moulded it, is capable of many uses; but it is remarkable that his technical perfection is equal to his range of subject, and that, metrically considered, the political poems, or even such a characteristic *jeu d'esprit* as 'Alexander and Lycon', are on an

equally high technical level with such masterpieces of meditation as 'The Child's Purchase', 'Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore', or 'To the Body'. This perhaps would not have been the case had Patmore merely been a poet of ideas — dramatically busy, like Browning for instance, to see how this mental attitude and how that suited him. But every poem, whether mystic or polemical, and the political pieces are polemics of a fierce kind, is the expression of one or other aspect of his central thought. That thought we know was simple. That idea we know was one. Having seen it domestically in the valley of *The Angel*, let us observe its meditative exaltation in the transcendental mountain air.

CHAPTER VII

THE INFERENCE

HAVING pursued thus far the analysis of human love, which forms the data of the Patmorean philosophy, we have next to trace the religious inference based upon it. Why, perhaps the reader may ask, must religion be introduced? How is it to be inferred from that which has been described? In the essay 'Love and Poetry' it is asserted that religion is to be inferred from the nature of love itself. Since love is a super-rational experience, it predicates a super-rational order: 'love is sure to be something less than human if it is not something more', and, further, Patmore reminds us that 'what love does in transfiguring life'—and this transfiguration was his starting-point—'that religion does in transfiguring love'. Patmore supports these statements by observing that 'love' in its customary manifestations 'is ridiculous unless it is regarded as a great sacrament', or, in other words, the symbol of something greater than itself. For, rationally considered, a young man in love is one who greatly exaggerates the difference between one young woman and

another. He can be saved from ridicule only by our knowledge that love is a unique yet well-observed experience. And just as there is abundant evidence of the super-rational experience of human love, there is evidence, recurrent if less abundant, of the experience of divine election. If those who claim to know God as a real person are less numerous than those who claim to be human lovers, the former have included some of the most remarkable minds we know. It was Patmore's business, as it had been Plato's, to relate the two experiences, but he remembered one fact which Plato had forgotten, namely, that Eros, the divine child, is *par excellence* the Domestic Deity. As we shall soon see, Patmore did not rely only on Christian evidence, though he thought that evidence to be the culmination of our present knowledge.

The familiar signs of human love are summarized in the prose essay 'Dieu et ma dame', which forms a prose commentary upon *The Unknown Eros*. A summary of these may be cited briefly here because the object of the essay is to show the analogy between human and divine love. This analogy is buttressed by examples in order to prove that the analogy is really an identity wherein human love is the precursory revelation of the love which God has for each of His creatures. Human love makes plain why such an infatuation may be inferred, since it is the expression of a relation between opposite and unequal characters. We must remember the Patmorean axiom :

> In the arithmetic of life
> The smallest unit is a pair.

If this is related to the phenomena of love, it is expressed by the statement :

Between unequals sweet is equal love.

Let us now consider the analogies, eighteen of which are quoted. The first is the fact of election. This enshrines the observation that one person will show an arbitrary preference for another which cannot be rationally explained. This fact, the first in the story of *The Angel*, is the first fact also in the religious life. God, to the Christian, has a unique love for each soul, which is peculiarly dear to Him because, though others may bring more wonderful gifts, no two will bring gifts of identical quality. The second analogy between the human and the divine love is that the lover must desire his mistress and prove his desire by his caresses. So too God must desire the soul, if the soul is to desire Him, and come to see her beauty reflected in the delight of His eyes. The third analogy consequently is that the only unforgivable sin to either lover is persistent infidelity. This being so, we observe, fourthly, that past corruptions, if they are past, increase rather than diminish the human and the divine lover's affection. The fifth analogy is that the lover, in either case, desires the person of his love in contemplation rather than any services from her. The better part is always Mary's. Inattention only can diminish his love, and services cannot replace, though they may prove it. Each lover, sixthly, delights in the vanity of his love, for this vanity is only her sign of rejoicing in the beauty that delights him. It is only her beauty in his eyes which makes

his love credible to her. In the seventh place the lover, in either relation, retains a power of absolute command, which he rarely uses, while she has a power of persuasion which she uses abundantly. Thus, eighthly, their relations are conditioned by a mutual desire to be captive : he to her body and she to his will. But whereas the divine lover enjoys 'distinctness in identity', this is that to which the human lover vainly aspires. He cannot wholly attain it. These two captivities, ninthly, constitute one freedom. This freedom is possible because, according to the tenth analogy, it is the condition of all love that there should be a reciprocal desire of the great for the small, and of the small for the great : a little love is a great thing. The eleventh analogy is the desire of either lover to die for his beloved. This analogy reminds us, twelfthly, that since inattention is an almost mortal offence between lovers, the reality of love is proved by the troubles which beset its course. There is in it a sigh also, because it is in the nature of love to promise more than in this life it performs. Being but a symbol of a greater love, 'something more than human', it is in the nature of each lover to find his fruition (this is the thirteenth analogy) in symbols, so that in the presence of his love the lover will fix his attention on a lock of her hair, or a minor grace of movement, to give focus to the overwhelming and too numerous beauties of her person. Does not this too explain the different aspects under which each of us delights to apprehend God ? In the fourteenth analogy we note that each kind of love can see best in the dark.

In this life, we note in the fifteenth analogy, the relation of God to the soul is only in its first stage, that of betrothal, so that the course of this love is beset with the same impatient desires, defective pleasures, and temporary separations which mark the condition of human courtship. But in either love, as the sixteenth analogy reveals, each lover is the complement and self-revelation of the other. Until they meet neither has the key to his or her own dreams. A remarkable analogy, the seventeenth, next appears. The happiness of either love is found in ' the co-existence of a celestial and exceedingly virginal pride with an insatiable appetite for its surrender and sacrifice '. Of this, being less familiar in the divine love, I quote the following characteristic explanation :

> Theologians say that the essential of the sacrifice of the altar is the infinite humiliation suffered by the second Person of the Holy Trinity in becoming flesh in the moment of transubstantiation ; and has not this humiliation its analogue in the case of the Virgin when she allows her love and beauty, thitherto nothing but spiritual splendour and ethereal freedom, to become the ally and thrall of the body ?

The eighteenth analogy is the indissolubility of the union of the two lovers when it shall have reached its formal stage.

This is the tale of the chief analogies, which Patmore believed could be indefinitely prolonged because the analogies were identities. He notices, however, two apparent exceptions, namely, that jealousy, which accompanies human love, does not torment the soul. He explains this on the ground

that each soul is unique in its own beauty and that none can be the same to God as another. 'There is none like her, none.' It is the case of 'election' over again. He suggests a second possible failure in analogy, namely, that 'in the higher relation the soul is always more or less troubled by the incredibility of so much bliss and honour'. This does not seem to me a failure, because the higher relation in this life is, we have been told, but 'at best a state of betrothal', and the state of betrothal between human lovers is proverbially troubled by these and similar doubts.

We have lingered over these analogies because the thread of Patmore's philosophy might seem to be weakest at the point where he seeks to connect the phenomena of human love with religion or divine love. The strands here have to bear the chief strain, and the poems of *The Unknown Eros*, which these analogies serve to introduce, cannot be apprehended, though they may be enjoyed, unless the relation of human to divine love is understood in its analogies. To Patmore human love predicated something beyond itself. That which was beyond it was expounded by the Christian religion as the great contemplatives had understood it. If you are to understand human love, he would say, examine its reciprocal nature, and note the promise which it but incompletely performs. If you would understand the Christian mystics, the key, he would say, is to be found in the relation of a pair of human lovers. Love explains religion : religion is the illumination of love. In an interesting note preserved by Mr. Basil Champneys from a diary, as

one of the foreshadowings of these Odes which were composed soon after the death of Patmore's first wife, he says, and the italics are his own :

> The relation of the soul to Christ *as his betrothed wife* is the key to the feeling with which prayer and love and honour should be offered to Him. In this relation is a mine of undiscovered joy and power.

He invokes the Greek myths to support his contention that, in their suggestion of the Incarnation, in the stories of Bacchus and Persephone, Christian mysticism is not, as it were, a by-product or provincialism of thought, but may be considered to be the elaborate development of doctrines discerned rather than explained by the human mind in all ages, and needing only the additional 'fact' of Christ's Incarnation to make them real in deed as they were previously real in divination. His appeal to pre-Christian evidence is seen most simply in his choice of the myth of Eros and Psyche for the subject and the title of his religious odes. In human love the manifestations are what they are because they are the realities in little of the divine relation. With the human we must begin. On that sure basis we may build a little. This building or inference is the subject of *The Unknown Eros*; and we may note again that, just as the one lover chooses his beloved by an act of faith and election, so religion has its beginning in a similar confession of faith. The aim of the foregoing is merely to make the second, which many people do not accept, no less intelligible than the first, though the first, ironically enough, is accepted universally.

Before we consider the Odes themselves, however, the poet's particular intention deserves to be recorded. No words can compete with Patmore's own in describing it. These Mr. Basil Champneys, his biographer, has preserved in a series of letters to an unnamed friend ; and from them I take the following passages :

' I have hit ', he says, ' upon the finest metre that was ever invented, and on the finest mine of wholly unworked material that ever fell to the lot of an English poet.' This material was the discovery by him of the interior subject of his previous poems, which he now wished to disentangle from them. The discovery led him to confess in ' The Child's Purchase ' that

> When clear my Songs of Lady's graces rang,
> Little guess'd I 'twas of thee I sang !

Who is it of whom he speaks ? The Odes seem to provide two answers which are really the same. The general answer is Psyche, the Soul, the bride-elect of the Divine Eros. The particular answer is the Blessed Virgin, whose experience on the transcendental plane is as typical of the divine relation as the experience of Honoria was of the generically human one. He needed a heroine for his songs of divine love, and used the Psyche of the Greek or the Virgin of the Christian mythology indifferently.

The subject on which he hoped to write when these letters were being written, ' the mine of wholly unworked material ', was the marriage of the Virgin, of which every woman's marriage is the symbol

and the human counterpart. 'You will be glad to hear', he writes again, 'that I have begun the great ode' ('The Child's Purchase'), 'or rather the ode on the great subject.' The subject of the ode is an invocation to the Blessed Virgin. On this he says: 'The more I consider the subject . . . the more clearly I see that it is the one absolutely lovely and perfect subject for poetry.' For 'perfect humanity verging upon, but never entering, the breathless region of divinity, is the real subject of all true love poetry; but in all love poetry hitherto an "ideal" and not a reality has been the subject more or less. Here there can be no exaggeration, and yet all is quite simple yet without strain. The whole difficulty of the subject will be in getting rid of the vulgar ideas of "greatness" and seeing the matter in all its essential smallness and homeliness and warm-heartedness.' For these qualities, let us remember, were to give actuality to both poems; the principle to shirk no detail in the human love-story, to note and to record the living realities of love and domesticity, was to make the religious poems equally intimate, personal, and free from vagueness. Beside, *The Unknown Eros* is frankly that which *The Angel* was in substance only, namely, religious poetry; and religious poetry has a difficulty peculiar to itself. 'Very few good poets', he says in these letters, 'have ever attempted to write religious poetry, knowing the almost insuperable difficulty. In the few who have attempted it nature and humanity are withered up instead of being beatified and developed by the religious thought. The Incarnation, in fact, is merely a dogma. It has

not got beyond mere thoughts. Perhaps it will take thousands of years to work itself into the feelings, as it must do before religion can become matter of poetry.' His intention, the difficulty of which is here confessed, was serious enough to make him take in 1877 the first of four pilgrimages to Lourdes. He believed that, just as his final hesitations before joining the Roman Church had been laid at rest only by the act of submission, so this new profession of obedience to those practices of hers which were not of obligation, and to which he was not naturally inclined, might thereby win the reward for which he hoped, the power, namely, to treat the 'perfect subject' as alone it deserved to be treated.

An epic has its own order, the order of a narrative. A series of odes has the order of flashes of lightning, none the less real perhaps because not to be logically discerned. Book I. of *The Unknown Eros* contains many odes not on the theme, but on its applications. The popular odes on his children are there. The political odes are there. The heart of the matter is not. In Book II. we find it, and the heart of its heart is the fifth Ode, 'Sponsa Dei'.[1] It is, so to say, the beautiful point of

[1] Of the burnt prose volume with this title, Mr. Gosse, who was one of the few friends who read the MS., says the little which can be said in his excellent study of the poet, published in 1905. Opinions differ on the extent of our loss, but we can follow Mr. Gosse in his lament, and rate it high. Of the reasons for the destruction of the MS. the most convincing is that Patmore could not stomach the suggestion of G. M. Hopkins that it should be submitted to his director. The suggestion was tactless because Patmore never wished to trespass on theology. He only wished to illustrate its dogmas from the life, and in these illustrations he claimed his freedom, and when it was ignored or beset, could rarely resist the temptation to burn. The nine Odes were once the subject of another fire, and escaped only because a few copies of the privately printed edition had been abstracted. 'Sponsa Dei', being in MS., was really destroyed, and Patmore invited the letter of cold comfort which Hopkins sent on hearing the news. Patmore should not have yielded to Hopkins' opinion.

departure which catches the theme at the highest point to which the Dean had carried it in 'The Wedding Sermon' on which the epic of *The Angel* closed. It seeks to answer the question which the lover in *The Angel* was content merely to ask, when he meditated on 'that not impossible she', his beloved. Her name at first seemed sufficient answer to the question, 'What is this maiden?' the intimacies of whose sweetness are here recalled in the lines:

> If she does something but a little sweet,
> As gaze towards the glass to set her hair,
> See how his soul falls humbled at her feet!

Where else, I would ask, are the minimal graces of love accorded their due rank among its pleasures? I can recall no poet who has had such an alert eye for these *deliciae* of love as Patmore shows in this and similar passages. We may remember, in justification of this claim for him, that the only gift for which he asked was

> The power of saying things
> Too simple and too sweet for words.

To Patmore, as we know, every mood of human love, however transient, was a symbol. Its immediate significance was explored in *The Angel*. Its transcendental inference is the subject of 'Sponsa Dei', the crucial ode:

> Who is this Maiden fair . . .
> Whom each has seen
> And known, with sharp remorse and sweet, as Queen
> And tear-glad Mistress of his hopes of bliss,
> Too fair for man to kiss?
> Who is this only happy She,
> Whom, by a frantic flight of courtesy,

> Born of despair
> Of better lodging for his Spirit fair,
> He adores as Margaret, Maude, or Cecily ?
> And what this sigh ? . . .
> *Are all, then, mad, or is it prophecy ?*

To which comes the answer :

> What if this Lady be thy Soul, and He
> Who claims to enjoy her sacred beauty be,
> Not thou, but God ; and thy sick fire
> A female vanity, . . .
> A reflex heat
> Flash'd on thy cheek from His immense desire,
> Which waits to crown, beyond thy brain's conceit,
> Thy nameless, secret, hopeless longing sweet,
> Not by-and-by, but now,
> Unless deny Him thou !

This is the explanation of the sigh which runs through all human love, and the reason why such love promises more than it performs. Its home is not here. Its desire is for some one of whom the beloved is the semblance only. As he says in ' The Open Secret ', the last word of this volume, it recounts

> Proof of high kinship unconceiv'd,
> By all desired and disbeliev'd.

All the analogies of nature which led him to base his philosophy upon the scientific truth that

> In the arithmetic of life
> The smallest unit is a pair,—

all these hints and similars, and the infinite corroborations of physical and sidereal motions,—are

> Fancies in each thing that is
> Which nothing mean, not meaning this.

But the secret is expressed in its clearest and commonest lineaments in every generation, in that drama which is sex to the scientist and passion to the poet, though the lovers are often unaware of the parable which they embody, and the scientists are puzzled at the problem which they seek to sound. Yet

> Maiden and youth pipe wondrous clear
> The tune they are the last to hear.

That tune, whose variations have been the substance of lyric poetry since it was first sung to the lyre, is itself but a variation, a phrase, on the theme of ' Sponsa Dei '.

That the soul is the bride-elect of God was better understood when the Greek myths were being written than it has been since, for progress is a crab which mainly runs backwards. In the myth of Eros and Psyche it is open to all eyes except those of some commentators. The Greek myths contain it in its simplicity, as the writings of the saints have confessed it in its obscurity. But Patmore, like a writer of myths, would not part with the body. Both body and soul were equally necessary to that ' unit ', which he discerned to lie at the root of all being, and which the organs of the human body even to the heart itself, with its reciprocal and contrasted action, exemplify. The naked truth is to be found in the body in its simplicity, and for this reason the most ecstatic mystical doctrines have never been far removed from the physical, and have grouped themselves, among Christian mystics, round the doctrine of

the Incarnation as their natural centre. The body is the form : *sic affici deificari est*, says St. Bernard, and the phrase is true of the fourth degree as of the first.

Consequently when we turn, as we now must turn, from the doctrine that the soul is Sponsa Dei, to its details, to the course of the courtship of God, the process in which His infatuation expresses itself, we find, as we have learnt to find, analogies at every point between the behaviour of the human and the divine lover. The latter plays the part which the human lover has rehearsed. The theme is single. The drama is one.

After the invocation to the Unknown Eros, 'unknown' because his 'heavens are these which not a poet sings', the second Ode, called 'The Contract', describes the nuptials of Adam and Eve, over which Milton did not linger. The ode is interesting for two reasons. The doctrine of virginity, hinted at in *The Angel*, is expressed more clearly here. For in this story of 'virgin spousals' virginity is said to consist in the health, not in the denial, of the lovers' desires, such lovers (like virgins)

> Finding in degrees unknown
> That which in act they shunn'd their own.

Secondly, Adam, the lover, is used symbolically for the natural man, whom God, that is Love, converts into the divine manhood, since the dogma of the Incarnation contains not only an historic statement but a mystery repeated in, and personally to be experienced by, every human being. Indeed Patmore ends 'The Contract' by speaking

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> Of sick-at-heart Mankind,
> Whom nothing succour can,
> Until a heaven-caress'd and happier Eve
> Be join'd with some glad Saint
> In like espousals, blessed upon Earth,
> And she her Fruit forth bring;
> No numb, chill-hearted, shaken-witted thing,
> 'Plaining his little span,
> But of proud virgin joy the appropriate birth,
> The Son of God and Man.

Love alone, a precise term as Patmore used it, can 'succour' man because love is his only illumination. To Patmore love was the nurse of civilization, and man's initiation into reality. This was no abstract thing. Just as his finest apostrophe to the Virgin, in 'The Child's Purchase', was not such phrases as :

> Desire of Him whom all things else desire!
> Bush aye with Him as He with thee on fire!

but the line,

> Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ,

so the body was to him man's storehouse of reality, his only saviour from infinity and vagueness, the one visible incarnation of the qualities which he described. The seventh Ode of Book II., 'To the Body', makes his meaning clear. He is careful to call the body the 'wall of infinitude', the bound set upon infinity to give it form. It is, he says, the

> Little, sequester'd pleasure-house
> For God and for His Spouse;

and was, significant phrase,

> Form'd for a dignity prophets but darkly name,
> Lest shameless men cry 'Shame'!

Then he explains, in order to decry, the Puritan attitude by remarking that it is because the body is

> So rich with wealth conceal'd
> That Heaven and Hell fight chiefly for this field.

The comforting doctrine of original sin enabled Patmore to explain the physical corruption of the body in death to be the consequence of that congenital defect. When that consequence had been allowed for, the soul, he said, 'panted' to go to its 'old abode', for which its own delightful duties had prepared it. His personal tribute to these duties may be cited ; and upon it the ode ends :

> O, if the pleasures I have known in thee
> But my poor faith's poor first-fruits be,
> What quintessential, keen, ethereal bliss
> Then shall be his
> Who has thy birth-time's consecrating dew
> For death's sweet chrism retain'd
> Quick, tender, virginal, and unprofaned !

These pleasures have been praised most intimately by Patmore, who is the purest of poets because the frankest, in that, though the word hardly occurs in his entire works, sex is the substance and the tissue of his poetry. According to his philosophy, its divine birthright is the hereditary honour of the soul, to which, for its proving, original sin is, by comparison, but the bad fairy godmother. For this reason, in a Puritan world, the only poet whose poetry is really steeped in sex, who sings no other song, who has no other image, has been regarded as a prude ! For he alone can accept it in simplicity. The world has now gone mad on the subject of

sex, for sex must drive any one mad who approaches it as a Puritan. The Pagans built their myths upon it, the very savage his superstitions. It has been left to the Puritan to accuse the Creator of indecency. Therefore it is an ironical delight to find that the poet who had no other theme, no other joy but the body, is Coventry Patmore, and because he had the joy and not the lack of it, the joyless word sex is never mentioned in his works. Only a poet to whom the Incarnation is more than a dogma and has become incorporated into the living tissue of his own mind can write profoundly of love or the body without using the word sex at all. Nor, for those with eyes to see, is Patmore's knowledge of sex less detailed than that of those who have devoted their lives to its study. There is implicit in such an ode as that to 'Pain' a world of knowledge and experience. It flashes its profound glance into the recesses of the nerves.

This ode 'To the Body', the happy reality which saves love from abstraction, is elaborated philosophically in two odes which should be studied with it. These are 'Legem Tuam Dilexi' and 'Pain'. The opening of the former deserves quotation:

> The 'Infinite'. Word horrible! at feud
> With life, and the braced mood
> Of power and joy and love;
> Forbidden, by wise heathen ev'n, to be
> Spoken of Deity,
> Whose Name, on popular altars, was 'The Unknown',
> Because, or ere It was reveal'd as One
> Confined in Three,
> The people fear'd that it might prove
> Infinity.

He shows that reality returns upon those who try to overpass all bounds in the form of pain, dashing themselves against which they find again reality's limits, and in those limits its delight. The desire for infinity is a 'rebellious spirit'; and nature in plant and stone confers their several forms on repressed centrifugal forces. It is not only the passions 'which take their vigour from control'. The strength of that which we overcome passes into the victors. The control produces the vigour by the imposition of the form. The hardness of the stone, the softness of the rose petal, the pliancy of the worm, are the qualities appropriate to the form with which their severally 'rebellious' energies have been limited. The 'just man' is he who affirms on himself those limits, which are the condition of his freedom. God Himself

> Every hour,
> By day and night,
> Buildeth new bulwarks 'gainst the Infinite;

and man becomes 'His semblance' by so doing.

> For, ah, who can express
> How full of bonds and simpleness
> Is God,
> How narrow is He,
> And how the wide, waste field of possibility
> Is only trod
> Straight to His homestead in the human heart,
> And all His art
> Is as the babe's that wins his Mother to repeat
> Her little song so sweet!

It is man's search after the divine freedom in self-imposed limits, he says, which has led to the

creation of monastic orders, in consequence of which the monk who embraces Poverty only ends by escaping all money cares ; the fit man who embraces chastity only finds that the imprisonment of the senses quickens his whole being, as a river fretted into dykes will irrigate a soil to more than its natural fecundity. And he who embraces obedience,

> Surrendering, abject, to his equal's rule,
> As though he were a fool,
> The free wings of his will,

is rewarded by the fullness of freedom. The ode on ' Pain ', in fact, is a learned essay on limits, as the following lines show :

> Angel, whom even they that will pursue
> Pleasure with hell's whole gust
> Find that they must
> Perversely woo.

Pain is ' the exceedingly keen edge of bliss '. It is the complement of pleasure. When either is prolonged it merges into the other. The marriage of the two is the climax of joy. The uses of pain for the body are to prepare it for ' arduous peace ' by brightening man's dullness until he shall have become

> The mirror merely of God's smile.

Not only does pain burn away the ochrous stains of corruption to leave the surface pure and bright, but it tends to become a joy, and the repose which it leaves behind is the effect of its influence. Pain is a ' bright exertion ', and the body glows therefrom. The nerves themselves sustain the pain which devours them. Pain, like love, being a good,

Patmore asks ironically (for the best things are 'postponed without regret') why man should await its arrival or fear to meet it, and in the absence of pain forget its gifts? In conclusion, therefore, he exclaims:

> O, for the learned spirit without attaint
> That does not faint,
> But knows both how to have thee and to lack,
> And ventures many a spell,
> Unlawful but for them that love so well,
> To call thee back.

The odes on 'The Body' and on 'Pain' deserve to be placed at the beginning of any analysis of *The Unknown Eros*, for the tendency of most religious poetry has been to dissipate into abstraction the rewards of the religious life. Patmore was concerned not only with the flowers and the fruits but also with the roots and the soils. Once having accepted the latter, we shall be the less tempted to accuse the odes which follow of abstraction. Indeed some of the poems, the Psyche Odes, have been criticized because of their simplicity. To Patmore, as we have seen, *The Song of Songs* provided not only a vocabulary fit for our highest apprehensions, but a vocabulary fit in itself. If God is Love, a human lover is Godlike; and the lover's language is necessarily the real language of religious poetry. Thus the courtship of Psyche and Eros has a double appeal, to the lover and to the mystic. Therefore, since all lovers begin by being mystics, the reader of either preoccupation should find in these Odes a philosophy to his mind.

The early odes of Book II. explain why philo-

sophy is repulsive to many, though, being poems and not arguments, they do not distinguish between the true and the spurious materials out of which books upon philosophy are composed. In 'Arbor Vitæ' we learn of the tree of traditional wisdom, which is 'all antiquity and no decay'. Its rich fruit, because of 'a rough, concealing rind', is rejected by the forest pigs, though it contains meat of 'heart-succouring savour' and drink of 'brain-renewing power'. It is, he says with Wordsworth, fragrant of

> odours that remind
> Of haunts of childhood and a different day.

Beside this tree

> Sits, Tartar-like, the Time's civility
> And eats its dead-dog off a golden dish.

When Patmore contrasted the popular art and amusements of the present day with the theme which, in his view, alone gave dignity to life and meaning to love, the theme that was the true inspiration of art, he said that these vulgarities were exactly described in the old phrase, 'the abomination of desolation set in the *holy* places', or, as we should say, the vulgarization of exquisite things. Mrs. Meynell described the process in an essay which he has quoted:

> The decivilized have every grace as the antecedent of their vulgarities, every distinction as the precedent of their mediocrities. No ballad-concert song, feign it sigh, frolic or laugh, but has the excuse that the feint was suggested, made easy, by some once living sweetness.

Patmore was concerned with the antecedent grace, if only to appreciate more fully the variations of the

common theme. But he was alone in isolating it from the confusions which he thought were the staple of most love poetry, and this has deprived him of an attentive audience. The variations are more popular than the theme. In the presence of the confusions or desolations of which he complained, it was natural that he should find matter for an ode in the rejoinder of the psalmist when he was asked by the Chaldeans to sing one of the Songs of Sion. The eighth ode is bitter with denunciation, and wittily describes the land inhabited by

> Prophets to whose blind stare
> The heavens the glory of God do not declare.

England, for whom he felt a despairing patriotism because the traditional aristocracy of government was being finally overthrown in his own day, was

> A nation which has got
> A lie in her right hand and knows it not.

Those who can best sing to such a nation are apt to sing in solitude. He would win their secret so that armed by meditation, a habit of the mind, he might deal blows worthy of a cause the praises of which would be scorned and rejected. This is more than a counsel of despair.

Shelley was right when he said that the world is ruled by ideas, and that the authors of these ideas are its real, though unacknowledged, legislators. This is true, but the rulers of any particular generation are those whose ideas slipped into currency through the style of the poets and thinkers of fifty years or so before. We are at present living in a world dominated by the ideas of John Stuart Mill

and his contemporaries, which, through his religious instinct, were set to music by Ruskin, whose style converted them into a popular air. Democracy is the fashion. But what contemporary supposed that Mill and Carlyle (so good at diagnosis, so hopeless at prescriptions) would supply the commonplaces of a later hour, or that the machinery of representative government would be idealized as democracy, and the position of women be supposed to be in the nature of things as Mill, of all people, had stated it? Because this has happened, we find that there is a force in 'the life removed', and a power in thought and silence the greater for its quiet growth. To say, then, as Patmore does elsewhere, 'If you want to influence the world for good, leave it, forget it, and attend only to your own interests', is merely to affirm that to improve his own character is a man's surest means of improving the world, a policy which would alarm the practical man were his views long enough. But he concerns himself only with the immediate present. Such influences and the virtues which they breed are called passive only because their effect is reserved, but to be capable of reservation is almost a definition of capacity, and the slowest growing things live the longest. In the disregard of Patmore's ideas, the political corollaries of which we shall shortly consider, there may lurk a promise of future influence; for democracy, like a human being, will find itself out in middle age. No hope is implied in observing that his influence, if it grows, will be the greater for having been unsuspected for half a century.

In the tenth Ode, 'The Cry at Midnight',

Patmore denies that a man is the measure of all things. He remarks that those who make this assumption the base of a private philosophy are apt to miss all that lies beyond the range of their personal perception since the 'self' is an accidental quantity, and the immanence of the Son of man must not be recognized to throw doubt on his transcendence. Patmore revealed the sources of his inspiration in traditional theology and 'made it his only claim to be heard' that he had done so. His criticism is directed against idiosyncrasy, and democracy might well remember that it applies to generations and to movements as to men. In an age of popular studies there is force in a later writer's reminder that, speaking of the traditional poet,

> Without him men will read the past
> So wholly wrong that their delight
> In it is the conceit it cast
> By contrast proof that they are right.
> In truth, the salt of history is
> To criticize men's cherished way
> By past dissimilarities
> From vulgar standards of to-day.

In 'Auras of Delight' he turns directly to the subject of love, which, as commonly misapprehended, he depicts by the symbol of

> a dove
> Tangled in frightful nuptials with a snake.

This would seem to mean that love as most men know it, that is to say, without consideration, is 'a tortured knot', because the disillusion which accompanies the misapprehension of its promise converts it into a passion without order, an appetite

without rest. In the disquiet which ensues when the promise of love is found not to be matched with performance, Patmore discerns a fate similar to the fate which attends

> The heart where good is well perceiv'd and known
> Yet is not will'd.

It cannot be willed, as we shall see in the Psyche Odes, unless the divine is loved in the human, and the beloved is recognized to be the prophecy, not the reality of the truth, affection for which human love inspires. The conclusion of this ode recalls the subject of Wordsworth's ' Intimations ', the early perceptivity of childhood, and how this was obscured and then recovered in later years.

We have now examined every ode in Book II., the more important half of *The Unknown Eros*, except the Psyche Odes wherein the delights of divine love are described. These contain the heights of the Patmorean philosophy, the intimate and secret expression of the heart of love as he knew it who had been led from the beauty of the body to another beauty of which human love is only the reflection. The reader will note in what follows that the intimacy of this divine love is conveyed in the sharpest outline. It is not vague or hazy. The relation is seen close at hand, so that we hear the confession of a soul that has experienced the divine love in his own person, and are not invited to consider the infinite beauty of some abstraction. Why has not this, the crown of love, been the theme of other poets ? Because, we are told in ' Prophets who cannot sing ',

> Views of the unveil'd heavens alone forth bring
> Prophets who cannot sing,
> Praise that in chiming numbers will not run ;
> At least, from David until Dante, none,
> And none since him.

The older the world grows the more difficult is it to see simple things in their simplicity. Life, beauty, and love, which rationalists idly seek to define, are called the mysteries of existence. Truly regarded they are the primary simplicities, for which reason, being the substance or foundation of all things, they should be reasoned from, and *not about*. The root of all things is necessarily itself absurd (or without root), idiotic (or in isolation). Since, too, the poetry which Patmore desired to write was the poetry of religion, the difficulty, as his correspondence has shown, was to see the subject in its 'essential smallness and warm-heartedness', and to show the divine love as an organic passion, an intimate experience as unique on its own plane as that which to every lover differentiates his devotion from the love of all others. This poetry could convince only by its poignancy. It must be a personal confession, the reality of which must not be open to dispute. The best witness to many of his apprehensions Patmore found in previous poets ; that which he failed to find was the theme disentangled from its variations. For a statement of the theme, then, he turned to theology. There the theme, 'God is love', was explicit. It was the emotional verification of this truth that he desired to set to song. For, as he was careful to record in the last ode of *The Unknown Eros*, Truth has two voices :

> One, with the abysmal scorn of good for ill,
> Smiting the brutish ear with doctrine hard,
> Wherein She strives to look as near a lie
> As can comport with her divinity;
> The other tender-soft as seem
> The embraces of a dead Love in a dream.

A dogma is the affirmation, or dry bones, of a truth: a poem the fit expression of the feelings of a man who has experienced it in his own person. Poetry, the life of religion, was to Patmore the confession of delights which would not be believed by those who are not poets, unless reinforced by the formal witness of some external sanction. This external witness was for him provided by the Church; and he claimed for the Church that it furnished in its dogmas the sanction to the feelings, in the truth of which most men would not dare to confide unless they could rely on the set statement of dogmas to justify them. In *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower* he declared:

> The Catholic Church alone teaches as matters of faith those things which the thoroughly sincere person of every sect discovers, more or less obscurely, for himself, but dares not believe for want of external sanction ('Aurea Dicta', XXXVIII.).

And again in *Religio Poetae* he defended his insistence on the dignity of human love upon the ground that

> . . . the whole of after-life depends very much upon how life's transient transfiguration in youth by love is subsequently regarded; and the greatest of all the functions of the poet is to aid in his readers the fulfilment of the cry . . . , 'Let not my heart forget the things mine eyes have seen'.

Once, then, we realize that his Psyche Odes are the relation of no abstract desire, but a confession of personal intimacy, we can accept them simply for what they are, namely, the story of a love affair as real and personal as any other, though God is the hero and the Soul the betrothed heroine of its adventures.

In 'Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore' he begins by saying that only sincere lovers, typified among others in

> Young Lover true, and love-foreboding Maid,

can understand that which is to follow. Its substance is the 'music of their half-remembered dreams'. The love in which there is no final pathos is the love which they themselves intended. They grow to realize this intention when they make the primary object of their affection not each other but Love himself.

In the 'Eros and Psyche', and it will be convenient to use these names now that their personal nature has been understood, Eros first appears when Psyche has grown weary of an active search for him. In a receptive mood she is content to wait, not so much eager to respond as to enjoy his presence and to allow him to enjoy hers. Eros asks if she never guessed that he desired her long before she desired him, and if it had never crossed her mind that her struggles were fewer than his own? His first gift to her is the repose which his presence brings, and while she is thus being shaped into his likeness she exclaims:

> fill'd with thee am I
> As the cocoon is with the butterfly!

When she asks for a sign that he is her destined lover and not a seducing fiend, Eros asks what stirs within her and offers to her the following test :

> A fiend, my Psyche, comes with barren bliss,
> A God's embraces never are in vain.

She admits the movement of a new life within her, and says that the rule of his love is now the easiest of laws. She desires it indeed so passionately that she asks how she can maintain her purity in the flame with which his love enfolds her. Eros replies that purity is not to be compared with snow but rather to the ' integrity of fire ', and that he demands each of her three kingdoms, her body not less than her soul, and her soul not less than her spirit. Psyche then asks why a God should desire a mortal in marriage. Why, Eros replies, should a beggar maid be curious of the King's preference, as if it were not an obvious flattery of her that he had divined in her a ' power of growing king-like ' in his company, which many of the court ladies had lacked ? Indeed the beggar maid could give to the king no greater affront than to question his choice, for such a question would show her to be ignorant of that equality which love confers on those who are unequal in all else. Her nothingness should be her chief boast, since it is her principal charm for him ; and if the beggar maid continued to protest, the king would only send her to her hedge again. Psyche receives this so delightedly that she begs for something bitter to give an edge to her enjoyment. Eros then warns her that her present ecstasy will have its term. She

could not bear the sight of his beauty by daylight, therefore his visit will end with the dawn. After his embrace, too, has she not already learnt that night is the light of love's pleasures? She can indeed see him better in the dark. Thus Psyche has already learnt not to confuse the functions of the senses. Taste is sightless, because it transcends sight. Love is tactile, and the sense of touch is incommoded by the other senses to which, in love, it is superior. For touch is the primary sense, and alone is fit for love, since love is the primary simplicity. Moreover this present moment is only that of their betrothal. That which their nuptials shall be does not yet appear.

The enormous common sense of all this surely needs no emphasis. At least it would need none were there not abundant evidence that the art of love has been lost, and that next to nothing remains of the ceremony of love except the appetite. Indeed, to convince people that such an art exists, treatises are now being written and command a large sale among those who have nothing but the disappointment of a crude experience to remember. There is no getting away from the fact that 'all are mad', unless their initial infatuation is a prophecy not merely of a divine communion but of delights in the immediate present. Since it is easier to suppose the madness than to recover the lost art, marriage for most people is a mask which regulates a crude appetite, and the revolt against marriage continues the more unchecked for the words of insincere idealism wherein it is surrounded.

Psyche answers that all is well in his keeping,

and that should he ask her to suffer self-inflicted pain, it would increase the sum of her enjoyment. She has discovered that it is more pleasant to please him than to be pleased. His love has conquered her, and she exclaims :

> do with me as thou wilt,
> And use me as a chattel that is thine !
> Kiss, tread me under foot, cherish or beat,
> Sheathe in my heart sharp pain up to the hilt,
> Invent what else were most perversely sweet.

Nothing can undo the touch which made her his. He stirs to go, and at her protest replies that his absence is the *aliquid amari* for which she had lately asked. She will become, she says, ' a vacuous world ' without him, but that he is free to go because he is now wholly hers :

> And this thy kiss
> A separate secret by none other scann'd.

Although the whole of life is womanhood to him, Psyche realizes

> 'Tis all to know there's not in air or land
> Another for thy Darling quite like me !

He goes at last, and she promises to fill the dull hours of his absence with the musical memory of his praise. His last words are a caution that her songs must be

> Few, that so all may be discreet,
> And veil'd, that, seeing, none may see.

The Psyche Odes have fulfilled this warning, for though a few timid spirits have been repelled at the identity here expressed between the human and

the divine relation, the truth is that their intimacy has prevented them from seeming credible to normal men. But it was just this identity that Patmore lived and wrote to emphasize. He that has ears let him listen. The word here spoken he will not easily hear anywhere else.

The two Odes 'De Natura Deorum' and 'Psyche's Discontent' can conveniently be taken together, for the first deals with her fear at losing the lover (who departs by day), and the second is her complaint at the burden of desire with which his presence overwhelms her. Both, too, illustrate the aptness of the metre for dialogue. In the first she visits the Pythoness to confess her recent experience, and to demand an answer to the thousand questions which it raises in her mind. The first, as we should expect from the analogies of the two loves already noted, is her fear at the possibility of unfaithfulness, which is set at rest by the assurance that only Psyche's own will can ever set Eros free :

> He's present now in some dim place apart
> Of the ivory house wherewith thou mad'st him glad.

Indeed his love is the birth of a new life within her; and the defects of which she is now grown conscious serve, she learns, but to whet the appetite of his desire, because

> Love is not love which does not sweeter live
> For having something dreadful to forgive.

Her past, to which the first onset of joy seemed to give meaning, now looks vile in the retrospect by comparison, whereat the Pythoness reminds her that

Sadness is beauty's savour, and pain is
The exceedingly keen edge of bliss.

Psyche is again tormented by the thought that her behaviour may be unworthy of her lover, to which comes the answer that when Gods appear to men they come 'incognito', and desire to be taken to be the part which they assume. What shall she bring in return? This question elicits the exquisite reminder that

A woman is a little thing,
And in things little lies her comeliness.

The Pythoness adds that Eros will not soon tire of a mortal bride because, as in the myth preserved by Apuleius,

The bashful meeting of strange Depth and Height
Breeds the forever new-born babe, Delight.

Psyche then confesses that she loves him because Eros forbore formal addresses, and was authoritative and not merely good-natured. The Pythoness replies in words which most people will not be tempted to weigh as they deserve. I therefore quote them:

How should great Jove himself do else than miss
To win the woman he forgets to kiss;
Or, won, to keep his favour in her eyes,
If he's too soft or sleepy to chastise!
By Eros, her twain claims are ne'er forgot;
Her wedlock's marr'd when either's miss'd:
Or when she's kiss'd, but beaten not,
Or duly beaten, but not kiss'd.
Ah, Child, the sweet
Content, when we're both kiss'd and beat!

The positions may be reversed. There may be mutual indifference. But, failing either dissolution of the partnership, the final word must rest with one, even though authority is no less tempered by persuasion than persuasion is by authority. The talk of equality here is simply the application of a wrong name to the happy result which can be achieved only by inequality. Why the statement of the principle should be offensive, when the application is a necessary condition of happy marriage, is not clear. True, the wise man acts on principles, without stating his intention to do so. That is the essence of tact in all relations. But it is sometimes refreshing to have the principle also. Psyche has found pain to be but the excess of pleasure, and her new vanity is the recognition of the delight at her smallness which she has found in his eyes. For, with her, Eros is not

> At all less wise nor more
> Than human Lover is with her he deigns to adore.

She must think of him, not of the throne he leaves, lest she resemble a

> powder'd lackey, by some great man's board,
> A deal more solemn than his Lord !

If she doubts his delight at the sound of her laughter, let her look at the open sky, where she sees no king on his throne, nor any Titan forging thunderbolts, but three butterflies. It is his delight to be with the *children* of men.

Let the analyst of these delicate odes append the apology of the Pythoness for any too perspicuous words :

Clear speech to men is mostly speech in vain,
Their scope is by themselves so justly scann'd,
They still despise the things they understand.

In the ensuing ode, Psyche's 'discontent' is a recoil from his embrace, too fervid and prolonged for her endurance. She wishes for that distinctness in identity which is the privilege of divinity. Her half-shaped prayer is interrupted by Eros, who warns her to be careful, for he

Must not her beseechèd harm deny.

She corrects herself in time and says that day will give her the relief that she desires :

To bear, apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel coarse of customary life.

The picture here given of the several places of love and work in marriage is worthy of some consideration. Night, which is the light of love, requires the reciprocal repose of work and separation, and the contemplative is strengthened by an occasional return to the world. With wit she blames him :

Find'st thou me worthy, then, by day and night,
But of this fond indignity, delight ?

and, when he smilingly suggests that she is overbold, she replies :

Shall I, the gnat which dances in thy ray,
Dare to be reverent ?

She cannot guess the good which she desires, but she knows now what are its false mockeries. She loves him, but thinks that she would deserve his anger if the smallness which attracted him to her

should suffice to hold him permanently. Eros reproaches her persistent misunderstanding and says that that which is little to her is much to him. Is he, we may add, concerned with his rank ; does he not carry it as lightly as she carries her beauty ? It was Keats, not Shelley, who was always thinking of their disparity of birth. It is the child not its mother who wants it to grow. Yet its whole appeal to her lies in its dependence upon her affection. A flash of insight comes to Psyche at this point, and Eros tells her that she is claiming the pearl for her wine cup, and scorning the wine. Well, if she will have it so, let her accept the sweet, and say ' 'tis sacrifice '. She laughs for answer and falls asleep, still smiling, in his arms.

One of the finest Odes, ' The Child's Purchase,' I leave unsoiled by any detailed comment. It is an exquisite poem, from whatever quarter its readers may come.

There remains at the end of *The Unknown Eros*, by way of conclusion, ' Dead Language ', a description which (in another sense) must inevitably apply to the dry analysis attempted here. Patmore's monitor in ' Dead Language ' says that the thoughts which he has expressed in these odes should be like those from whence they come, not expounded in the vernacular, but decently cloaked in Latin, a dead language to all but scholars. To which the poet replies :

> Alas, and is not mine a language dead ?

At all events, the theme of his poetry has fallen on deaf ears, and that has been my excuse for attempting to present in prose its leading ideas in something

approaching to their natural order. I shall be lucky if the quotations have not the air of wild flowers plucked and imprisoned in a drawing-room vase. For they cry to be returned to their natural habitation on the upper slopes of Patmore's thought. There, in the thin mountain air of their original setting, the phrases twinkle like stars. Thompson and Crashaw have been more resplendent, richer in imagery, but there is an altitude in the Odes which is the very Alpine air. Moreover, the philosophy contained in them offers to the ordinary man not merely a summit to which he can attain, but a starting-point with which he is familiar.

CHAPTER VIII

'HOMO'

THE facts of love had now been studied by Patmore in their two established phases : the more immediate, between man and woman, and the less immediate, between God and the Soul. Love, the illumination of life, religion, the illumination of love, were thus removed from the realm of abstraction and studied in the flesh, where they become incarnate. It follows, therefore, that the body of a lover is the body of love itself, and for this reason we should expect further corroboration from the intensive study of the body of man, the instrument of his love in relation to his fellow. What then is the nature of Man, of the Homo, as the scientists and mystics alike have called him ; and how far does the 'unit of a pair', so conspicuous in his full development through love, subsist also in his physical constitution ? Hitherto we have worked outward. We began with the study of a pair of lovers and pursued their relation before and after marriage. From these data the reciprocal relation was inferred between each lover and Love himself ; and we were told that, according to theology, the

reason why the nuptial relation did not persist in heaven was because there the real presence of Love, to whom each soul is woman, supplied the reality of which every human lover is the semblance only, and because in virtue of its angelic nature the soul has developed its latent potentiality to the limit of the full homo, and assumed in regard to each other soul the masculine order of service or the feminine of adoration according to its proper quality or aspect compared with that of each of theirs. That is the external limit of the subject, of man to the world without and beyond him. To complete the analysis, it should be pursued now intensively by the study of his own internal constitution.

To this Patmore devoted *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*, his last book. Its four sections consist of CLXI aphorisms called 'Aurea Dicta', and three groups of brief meditations on 'Knowledge and Science', 'Homo', and 'Magna Moralia'. All are essays in paragraph. Those devoted to religion deal with the Incarnation, but, and in close relation to it, the central subject of the book is that which stands at the head of this chapter. *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower* is held to contain Patmore's hardest sayings, but these fall into their place and lose their strangeness once the subject, the nature and constitution of Homo, has been explored. The book is really a statement of forgotten definitions, and incidentally a valuable interpretation of Biblical symbols, which has the unusual merit of consistency, and in the traditional attribution of a mystic meaning to the use of every word, such as air, sea, tree, the points of the compass and the fowls of the air, lends

a neglected interest to canonical literature. The chief of these forgotten definitions is that of Homo, which was said to be made in 'Our' image, not as a form of speech, but in virtue of the multiple nature of its Creator. But as the Creator so the creature, which is, as we see in every example of creation, a projection or reflection of the source from which it comes. Man and woman, then, are the two reciprocal halves of Homo or mankind, though each half is also homo in little. The multiple nature of this being in man is that which we have to study here.

'The external man and woman', Patmore remarks in his last volume, 'are each the projected simulacrum of the latent half of the other, and they do but love themselves in thus loving their opposed likenesses.' He enforces this by the following quotation from Aquinas: 'Woman was created apart, in order that the distinction of the sexes (in the homo) might be better marked, and in order that the man and the woman herself (who is also a potential homo or entire humanity) might be induced to attend to that which is their worthiest contemplation', namely, Patmore continues, 'the reflection in themselves of the nature of God'. If then it is the nature of humanity to be that duality which the two sexes of the human species emphasize, though the duality is prominent in the anatomy and psychology of each and is reflected throughout the organs of the body, then there is no paradox in the two statements which sound most startling by themselves. Of these the first is that 'all knowledge worthy of the name is nuptial knowledge'. This simply means

that all worthy knowledge concerns man, and must therefore recognize a contradiction which is reconciled by the embrace or interfusion of his two constituent parts. The unity which we all seek is to be found when we know where to look for it, namely, in its expressions throughout nature, of which we ourselves are the most immediate embodiment that we know. By comparison with that, the Homo, the same principle is discerned at every turn; through the macrocosm, to use the old expression, as through the microcosm there runs the dual parallel, and this is the unity, knowledge of which can strictly be defined to be 'nuptial knowledge'. For as one of Patmore's stray sayings asserts, 'My love not only dares the most searching light of philosophy, but requires it'. Is it not true that the reason why much technical philosophy is barren is because its materials are spurious, in that it deals not with realities themselves but with natural laws which are only the condition of realities?

The second hard saying, 'the proper study of mankind is woman', is merely Pope's aphorism expressed in the light of this philosophy, which, unlike Pope's, defines the nature of man. We argue from the known to the unknown, from the powers that we know to those powers beyond ourselves; and our relation to the powers beyond ourselves must be the relation of the less to the greater, in respect of which we are as woman is to man. Though the entire humanity, Homo, is one, it can be studied intensively in its constituents; but each of these should be studied as a constituent, not as the entity to which, however reflected

severally in each of them, each jointly contributes. To Patmore science was the exploration of constituents, and he quarrelled with it only because he believed that these were explored as final ends in themselves without direction to the relation *inter se* which was necessary to explain them, and indeed lent to isolated phenomena their principal interest. Rationalism, as he wittily remarks, 'begins at the wrong end. Religion rationalises from the primary and substantial Reason, and explains all things. Rationalists take zero for their datum, and, do what they may, they can make nothing of it.'

We may remark here that most current scientific theories concerning man fail for want of positing a dual principle which, even when half-divined, lacks proportion because its crux, the nature of Homo, is not understood. Thus its studies are concerned with disease not with health, with the abnormal not the normal; and alienists busy themselves with the refuse of asylums, never with themselves. Yet, with the clue provided by the Homo, health is seen to be an unstable equilibrium, the normal a poise of opposed forces, and sanity the balance of contending powers. When the excess of the latter is studied in isolation, the general result has been to convict us all of abnormality because the factors of that are found to be present in every one. We have only to pick out those, which every one displays when his equilibrium is disturbed, to find ample excuse to name any one a degenerate whom it may be convenient so to stigmatize; and a return to common sense appears

only when some dim conception of the Homo dawns upon the observer. Thus Otto Weininger created a temporary stir by his theory that abnormalities could be explained by what he called the polarity of the sexes. He predicated an absolute masculine and an absolute feminine. Each man or woman, whose anatomy (he admitted) was only a rough guide to his or her constitution, occupied some point between these two extremes. His or her propinquity to the opposite absolute pole explained, said Weininger, his behaviour, especially if it was abnormal. But all this, which seemed merely ingenious, the conception of Homo would have given to him at once, and yet how surprised he and his readers would have been had they been invited to go for the explanation to Coventry Patmore! Weininger's was only an unsatisfactory and partial statement, the whole of which is contained in Homo, the single word.

Again, in the sphere of thought, the idea of relativity, the old paradox that truth is a contradiction in terms, are gropings toward the admission that all knowledge is 'nuptial knowledge', just as the pragmatic test is an intellectual attempt to show that until truth is studied in its workings, in man, where it is incarnate, it is apt to be an abstraction, and consequently inapprehensible. The adjective nuptial prevents those who cannot think beyond a wedding-cake from recognizing that abstract ideas lack outline and will not cohere until they are consubstantiated with matter, that is to say, in man and woman, where they are incarnate. The nature of life must be studied where it occurs or runs together.

To see it there is to see it in its most simple and suggestive form, where life is born in the embrace of the two principles whose conjunction is a third. The trouble is that the materials of most books upon philosophy are spurious. That is why their contents cannot be remembered. Man is considered, or some fragment of his sensation or of his mind; and the material world without him. But he is not regarded as the embrace of matter and mind. These are considered apart, not as functions of one another. Nor in regard to the external world is he considered as that part of it which has become incarnate in himself. Thought is thus reduced to a realm of abstraction, and justly, since man has been abstracted from it. All that remains to him is a lump of matter or a pure sensation. This divorce is the order of the day. But he is part of the universe, and consequently part of it is in himself. Therefore he must be used to interpret it and it himself. Consequently sex and religion are necessarily related, for the scheme of life is sexual, and religion is but the relation of man's life to the universe without and within him. How far we have travelled from good sense when the relation of sex to religion is made a reproach, as if sex and life were not interchangeable terms, and as if it should be strange that the beginnings of life should bear an obvious analogy to the beginnings of religion!

There is no greater error than to disregard such phrases as 'nuptial knowledge' on the assumption that they are mere hyperboles or figures of speech, especially when ample evidence is provided for

them. The analogies drawn by the poets are more than metaphors. We do not say of a child that he has his own eyes. There is nothing remarkable in that. But we cannot repress our wonder and delight that a child should have his father's eyes. Yet the likeness between fathers and children is not a semblance but a repetition. Common speech bears witness to the fact that the analogy is an identity. Even when humorously made, these analogies must be respected, for wit and wisdom are Siamese twins which die when they are surgically separated. The analogies would not be made by those whose makings are remembered if there were not a force of real attraction at work. Wilde made his readers laugh when he wrote: 'the best use of twilight is to illustrate quotations from the poets'; and the error of the cynic is rarely his observation but the inference which he bases upon it. The rationale of this quotation from *Intentions* is found in *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*, where, in 'Knowledge and Science', it is written:

> By far the worthiest use of natural science is in its provision of similes and parables, whereby the facts of higher knowledge are approximately expressed and their infinite credibility corroborated by lower likenesses. . . . There is no such parabolic speech as that of the qualities of the common magnet. Obvious fact, insoluble mystery, existing owing to contact with a greater power of the same kind, two opposed forces manifest in numerically one substance, rejection of its similar and desire for its likeness, power of propagating that living and alluring opposition in an otherwise neutral body, and, as it were, 'under the ribs of death', and, in exact proportion to its own force, positive producing and exalting negative or negative positive—what

is all this but the echo of the senseless rock to the very voice of far-off love, and the effect of the kiss of God transmitted through the hierarchies of heaven and earth to the lips of the least of beings. Man (homo) is a great magnet, half way between the greatest and the least. The male is the positive pole, the female the negative, and their attraction is the whole force of life, and their conjunction its whole fire and felicity. And, from man, we may rise to an almost concrete idea of God who made man in His own image.

What is the constitution of this image?

The body concerning which science confessedly knows so little—probably because science has never recognised the clue to its constitution—seems expressly formed for that cohabitation and communion of two persons (whose union is a third) which scripture and the Church declare that it is made for. . . . There are two brains, in which science has traced the indwelling of the legislative and executive functions, two systems of nerves, active and sentient, two sides to the body, obscurely but decidedly distinguished in their activities, two souls with two consciousnesses, the rational and the emotional, a heart with a double and contrasted action, and endless other dualities and reciprocities which are very far from being explained on the score of mere adaptation to external use; and withal a unity arising from co-operation which makes the body as clear an echo of the Trinity as the soul is. . . . The Incarnation is a present reality, the body actually the house of God.

We should therefore seek to know Him in his own home. When this has been explored, and love leads us directly to explore it, we discover that 'in the earlier half of the soul's progress, human loves are the interpretation and motives of the divine ; but, in the second, the divine love

becomes the interpretation and motive of the human', for it is through love that either sex discovers its own being, and grows to a stature as near that of the complete homo as the degree of its potentiality allows.

CHAPTER IX

THE APPLICATION TO SOCIETY

The statement of the theme is now complete so far as the writer has been able to present it. We have next to see how Patmore applied the lessons of the theme to the ordering of society upon the one hand and to art upon the other. The theme itself was important to him because it was the kernel of a general theory, or in his own words, the clue to human relations. Since he believed nuptial love, as above defined, to be the supreme revelation and illumination of life, he held that the problems of life and of art could be understood only by reference to it. A revelation, a light, a clue had been provided in the general but super-rational experience of love. It was our business then to meditate upon this primary mystery, the central parable of nature, and to search all human problems by its light. Nuptial love, in fact, was the myth open to all eyes in which the secrets of life, of art, of society were reflected, by reference to which they were to be apprehended, and in terms of which alone they could be approached with any chance of

fruitful study. In regard to society his writings are less prolific than on other topics, probably because he thought individuals alone, and not men in the mass, to be capable of improvement. 'The world', Patmore says in 'Aurea Dicta' XXVI., 'has always been the dunghill it is now, and it only exists to nourish, here and there, the roots of some rare, unknown, and immortal flower of individual humanity.' He held therefore that the improvement of a man's own character was his only sure means of improving the world. 'Public weal', he said in 'Amelia,' was 'God's remoter service', and the principles on which he thought that the public weal should be pursued were temporarily losing their practical force in his day, as they have lost their popularity in ours. Still these principles remained, and their summary is simple.

One of his favourite quotations was the remark which he attributed to Dr. Johnson: 'Inequality is the source of all delight'. I have to say 'attributed' for I have not been able to trace it in Dr. Johnson's works, though they contain many remarks of a like tenor, if not worded so pithily. So careful a student of Dr. Johnson as Mr. Alexander Montgomerie Bell, whose *Johnson Calendar* is a mine of wealth arranged with much discrimination, also holds that only the substance of the quotation, not the form, is to be found. For instance, in Boswell Dr. Johnson is recorded to have said:

> I reconcile my principles very well, because mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination. . . . Sir, all would be losers, were all to work for all:—they would have no intellectual improvement. All intellectual improve-

ment arises from leisure: all leisure arises from one working for another.[1]

The virtue of inequality in the relation of love has been abundantly explained. Since to Patmore love was the key, it is not surprising that he should apply it to the wider problems of society.

But where, we may ask, are the masculine and feminine elements in society to be found? The masculine element is that of right reason which controls, and the feminine that of labour which requires direction. The former is to be looked for in those whose birth and education have fitted them to govern. 'The simple', Patmore says in one of his fragments,

> Take fairer measure of the goods of Earth
> To mean, because they should mean, fairer worth.'

The feminine element in society is that of the mass which, left to itself, has only its emotions and appetites for guide. Good birth is as necessary as education, because 'hereditary honours' make honour itself hereditary; and since the best intellectual qualifications cannot be found, much less collected, in any one body, breeding and class maintain a standard and tradition which remedies to some extent the fact that the aristocrats of intellect and those of birth are rarely one and the same people. The standard of the latter is the better for being largely unconscious, for only when it is unconscious has it become instinctively assimilated. It is, I think, this respect for breeding, tradition, and authority which made Patmore place

[1] Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. ii. p. 9. Macmillan, 1900.

his conception of the golden age in the remote (and unhistoric) past ; just as it is the ill-considered hope of the aspiring demos always to place its utopias in the future, a hope which lends currency to such idle dreams as that of the perfectibility of social man. Our business here, however, is to state the case for inequality, and to argue against the dogma of equality which Rousseau's style and intellect imposed upon the modern world.

The sincere defenders of equality rightly assert it to be a dogma, and on that ground it may with intellectual honesty merely be denied. But inequality, like most traditional dogmas, is a self-evident truth ; and, if there can be degrees of self-evidence, we have only to ask which is the more self-evident to see how many arguments must be adduced before the equality of men can be entertained without a protest. Modern writers therefore proceed to defend equality by asking what follows from its denial. Mr. Hilaire Belloc observes :[1] 'If men are *not* equal, then no scheme of jurisprudence, no act of justice, no movement of human indignation, no exaltation of human fellowship, has any meaning'. To this I would reply that human indignation has meaning in regard to animals without implying their equality with men, and that jurisprudence (the ideal of justice we will consider in a moment) deals with men in the mass ; and for this reason a rule of the road, so to speak, has to be arbitrarily enforced, a rule which *ex hypothesi* must be general, reposes on a convention, and has no basis but mathematical convenience for its parti-

[1] *The French Revolution*, chapter i.

cular work. In fact this was once recognized, for the historic desire was for 'equality before the law', not for equality in general. And equality before the law is compatible, and was long associated, with an aristocratic ordering of the state. Jurisprudence does not treat men as men, but as units in the state, and because it treats them as units, it abstracts from them everything which is humanly valuable and reduces them to a common, that is to say, a mathematical denominator. Their equality is a legal fiction, comparable to that of which Patmore himself speaks when he refers to

> The fiction of the Christian law
> That all men honourable are.

Men in the mass must be so treated, for in the mass we deal with them as numbers, but this treatment of them is based upon a legal fiction, not upon a human fact. Mr. Belloc seems indeed to recognize this when he says, in the same context, 'we may say that whatever man has of his nature is the standard of man, and we may say that in all such things men are potentially equal'. Exactly, but the qualification is fatal to the argument. Potential equality is present inequality, and it is their present inequality which makes men interesting and useful to one another. Again when he says 'what is common to all men is not *more* important but *infinitely more* important than the accidents by which men differ' he is thinking of men in the mass as subjects of law contrasted with, say, animals; but that which is important among men when compared with each other is precisely the 'accident' which distinguishes

one of them. On these accidents the nobler half of man's achievements has depended, and if we make the pursuit of these our aim, our ideal will be not justice at all (which in the sense of general equality is a recent heresy), but nobility, the encouragement of excellence and differences. For, as Patmore says in 'Remembered Grace':

> succour to the feeblest of the wise
> Is charge of nobler weight
> Than the security
> Of many and many a foolish soul's estate.

Some time since the above was written Mr. Belloc contributed to *Blackfriars* (May 1920) a masterly analysis of the policy of 'Nationalization', the purpose of which was to show 'its origin, motive, object and probable effect'. He pointed out that the Socialists 'usually regard (economic) inequality and always regard exploitation as immoral', and that it is a dogma with them that 'labour has a moral right to the whole of that which it produces'. Mr. Belloc then remarks that a philosophy of common property has been recurrent in human history, but that this philosophy never became a force in the world until the modern evils of capitalism gave to this philosophy a soil wherein to grow. Then he adds:

> It is clear that the demand that the whole produce of labour should go to the producers, even to those who are not possessed of the implements and land necessary to production, would have had no practical effect, and would probably not have been even theoretically held by any one for long, were there not certain real evils for which this

abstract conception offered a remedy, and those evils we find in capitalism.

Thus Mr. Belloc is not opposed to economic inequality, recognizes that private property (even when well distributed) involves it, and that, as he has said elsewhere, private property is normal to man. I think, therefore, my criticism of his dogma of equality holds good : that his argument is really that for equality before the law, and that perhaps the democratic bias in his philosophy is merely a strenuous reaction against the abuse of private property which we see at present.

It was nobility, therefore, not justice, that in Patmore's view was the end for which man was created ; and this the state should be framed to encourage. The object of law might be justice : the end of the state should be nobility, and since this end or ideal reposes on the self-evident dogma that men are unequal, he argued that institutions should reflect this inequality. To do this they must be hierarchical, that is to say aristocratic, because an aristocratic society secures ends not frankly recognized elsewhere, namely, privilege and variety between classes, and the personal rather than the departmental relation in their mutual intercourse. To secure variety and avert enslavement, there followed belief in private property widely distributed, so that the measure of dependence of one class on another might be balanced by the measure of independence proper in different degrees to each. The institution of private property alone can give this independence. The possession of private property is the only guarantee of personal freedom.

The abstract value of class distinctions then lies in their reflection of human inequality; and, though they never correspond with it in practice, where private property is well distributed, they encourage its approximation in the right direction rather than exacerbate it in the wrong. As Patmore says in the essay, 'Thoughts on Knowledge, Opinion, and Inequality', which is contained in *Religio Poetae*:

> The immense and unalterable inequalities in the knowing faculties of man are the source and in part the justification of that social inequality which roughly and very partially reflects them. Many otherwise amiable and conservative thinkers have, however, made the mistake of conceding that such inequality is, abstractedly considered, an evil, though a hopelessly incurable one. Conservative teaching would be much more effective than it is were it more frequently occupied with proving that such inequality is no evil but a very great good for all parties.

Then follows the dictum attributed to Johnson, which is illustrated by reference to the facts of love:

> All delight—not all pleasure, which is quite a different thing—will be found, when thoroughly examined, to consist in the rendering and receiving of love and the services of love. . . . There is no love, and therefore no sweetness which is not thus conditioned; and the greater the inequality the greater the sweetness.

We are then invited to examine the relations which usually subsist between an hereditary gentleman and his hereditary unequals and dependants, and compare them with the ordinary fraternal relations between a Radical master-tradesman and his workmen.

> The intercourse between the gentleman and his hind or

labourer is free, cheerful, and exhilarating, because there is in it the *only equality worth regarding*, that of *goodwill*; whereas the commands of the sugar-boiler or the screw-maker to their brothers are probably given with a frown and received with a scowl. Social inequality, since it arises from unalterable nature and inevitable chance, is irritating only when it is not recognized.

That is an admirable comment, but the following picture, which is repeated from the Odes, is worth adding for its own sake:

Not a plough-boy or a milk-maid but would feel, without in the least knowing why, that a light had passed from their lives with the disappearance of social inequalities, and the consequent loss of their dignity as integral parts of a somewhat that was greater than themselves.

For, as Patmore puts it in a hitherto unreprinted article on 'Courage in Politics':

All men are born believers in aristocracy. Who is there —out of the House of Commons—who does not hold the fundamental dogma of politics that the best should govern? Modern democracy means nothing but the possession of the elective power by ignorant aristocrats, by those who desire that the best should govern but have no sufficient means of discovering the best.

Mill and his followers supposed that universal suffrage would fulfil the desire that the best should govern, and even provide the means for their discovery, forgetting that the greatest common measure of popular ignorance is not political wisdom, but chaos. To save us from that, it has become necessary to humbug the electorate, if only to give some permanent direction to affairs. For even disinterested statesmen have 'to make truth look as near a lie'

as possible, if they are to win the support of the populace. We have now learned that the vote of the multitude does not secure that the best shall govern. All it does, is to provide a convenient safety-valve for popular ignorance, which it flatters and disappoints at the same time. The vote, such a nuisance in itself that only about half the electors can be cajoled to exercise it, has proved democracy to be impossible. A plutocracy therefore remains to supply the minimum of aristocracy essential to the ordering of human affairs. Patmore accurately describes the condition at which we have arrived as follows: 'Democracy is only a continually shifting aristocracy of money, impudence, animal energy, and cunning, in which the best grub gets the best of the carrion'. The advocates of democracy 'hate hereditary honours, chiefly because they produce hereditary honour and create a standard of truth and courage for which even the basest are the better in so far as they are shamed by it'. The pursuit of equality, so far as it is attainable, is said to provide a useful comment upon Dr. Johnson's saying, in that, according to a traveller in America, 'In the United States there is everywhere comfort but no joy'.

It is noteworthy that the ideal of nobility has always arisen in small communities, or in landed societies wherein the hierarchical order reproduces their character, and that it is in these small communities or that order that the highest human achievements have been observed. For in these the man of genius, intellectual or other, has not had the deadweight of the mass against him, for their

institutions were framed to reflect the difference which inheres in himself. The ideal of justice, on the other hand, is popular with large communities not so ordered: it is a general, not a particular desire, for that which every one privately desires is personal, that is preferential treatment. When this is denied, as it is to a crowd whether of shoppers or voters, the inevitable protest takes an inverted form and demands that no one shall be treated better; hence the discomfort of large shops or big hotels which pay no respect to individuality except in so far as covert tipping can secure it. Tipping is the only thing which makes a democratic society bearable. Rank gives dignity to the lowest, for, when men cannot be treated individually, they can at least be honoured for the rank to which they belong, and this rank, whatever it be, gives them the dignity that they desire, namely, to be numbered with their peers, and to share, therefore, a collective standing. Where this order is acknowledged no one lacks the respect of his fellows.

What, then, is to be said of the chaotic scramble of the modern world? Of this Patmore remarks, at the conclusion of his essay on 'Inequality':

> It is quite possible to change the forms of social inequality, but to do away with the fact is of all things most impossible. It is the trick or ignorance of the demagogue to charge existing inequalities with the evils and injustices in which they began, and with which they were attended for a long time afterwards. When conquest or revolution establishes the ever-inevitable political and social inequalities in new forms, it takes many generations of misery and turmoil to introduce into them the moral equality which renders them

not only tolerable but the source of true freedom and happiness.

For some unexplained reason, perhaps because many were expressed in verse, it has been the fashion to decry Patmore's political prophecies. Yet they have been startlingly fulfilled ; and the modern critics of the servile state only depict what he analysed so ruthlessly. Increased rather than curtailed by education, 'the orgies of the multitude' have begun ; and lest that phrase, apart from its context in Book I. of *The Unknown Eros*, lacks definition, let it be illustrated from the prose essay 'A "Pessimist" Outlook'.

'Despotism,' he begins, 'which is not government, but anarchy speaking with one voice, whether it be the mandate of an irresponsible emperor or that of a multitude, is the "natural" death of all nationalities. They may die by other means, but this is the end they come to if left to themselves. . . . True education cannot exist under either kind of despotism. National life is the beginning and end of individual culture, as far as this world is concerned. The acquisition of knowledge by an unorganized or enslaved multitude, which must always be, in the main, self-seeking and unjust, is merely the acquisition of subtler and baser means for the advancement of individual covetousness and the indulgence of individual vices. Such education is but a jewel in a swine's snout.'

On the subject of popular education, and the results already gained therefrom, Mr. George Saintsbury well says, in his preliminary chapter to *Notes on a Cellar Book* :

The constituencies have been flooded till they have become incalculable ; the general common sense of the

country has been weakened by a watery overflow of so-called education ; statesmen, never the most trustworthy of persons, have become utterly untrustworthy ; and the great institutions *which were once towers of refuge and strength against popular delusions* have opened their gates to any rising of the waters. One was once pretty sure that whether a Bishop or a Judge was or was not a mirror of sanctity or a pattern of wisdom, mere silly or eccentric fads would find no favour with the one, and mere popular clamour receive no attention from the other. Every one must decide for himself whether it is so now.

The present position is put in a nutshell by Patmore in the quotation which Professor Saintsbury's words have just enforced. For, as Patmore continues,

> Fools may fill the air with sentimental or hypocritical 'aspirations' for the good of the community ; but *no community exists where no excellence has the power of exerting itself politically* and more or less in spite of the ignorance and malice of those whom it would serve. . . . No soil has ever yet been found to bear two crops of national life, though the corruption of one has often been found, after many generations of consummated decay, to be very useful dung for the nourishment of other and far removed fields. Considering what men are, the wonder is, not that all great nationalities should have come to a shameful end, but that their ordinary duration of life should have been a thousand years.

When we look at history the story of Rome seems short, but how many of us remember that the story of England since it became a nation at the Conquest has hardly yet passed that limited term ? Of the remoter future then, Patmore sees merely the beginning of what is politely called a period of transition, or, more strictly, a 'corruption' of our civilization, which means that after the decline shall

have been completed the seed of a national life will spring again elsewhere. In that far view there is no pessimism but a certain exaltation in acknowledging that the death which must precede that resurrection is beginning. In the exclamation (Ode, '1880–85')

> Forward! bad corpses turn into good dung,
> To feed strange futures beautiful and young,

there is the joy of one whose eye is fixed on realities, and, so directed, cannot but rejoice in the appropriate means whereby they are encouraged to resume their power.

Of the immediate future he gives a picture as fascinating in its analysis as it is repugnant in its details. That which he describes is now familiar as the servile state, but he did not wait for that definition to describe the progress of the thing. He foresees:

> . . . the prying despotism of the vestry—the more 'virtuous' the more paltry and prying—persecuting each individual by the intrusion of its myriad-handed, shifting, ignorant, and irresistible tyranny into the regulation of our labour, our household, and our very victuals. . . . It will be a despotism which will have to be mitigated by continual tips, as the other kind has had to be by occasional assassination. Neither the voter nor the inspector yet know their power and opportunities; but they soon will. We shall have to 'square' the district surveyor once or twice a year, lest imaginary drains become a greater terror than real typhoid; we shall have to smoke our pipes secretly and with a sense of sin, lest the moral supervisor of the parish should decline our offer of half-a-crown for holding his nose during his weekly examination of our bedrooms and closets; the good Churchman will have to receive Communion under the

'species' of ginger-ale—as some advanced congregations have already proposed — unless the parson can elude the churchwarden with white port, or otherwise persuade him; and, every now and then, all this will be changed, and we shall have to tip our policemen and inspectors for looking over our infractions of popular moralities of a newer pattern.

Can any one deny that this picture is coming true?

The prohibition of wine and beer in America is but a mild beginning of prohibitions generally, which will hardly stop short of tobacco and diet, or remain on the remoter side of the Atlantic. Moreover we can now test in America Patmore's forecast of the way in which this interference will be met. He foresaw the growth of secret societies among the minorities who are proof against the folly of the faddist or the interference of the inspector, and the emergence of a secret, but inevitable, aristocracy which 'refuses to give interior assent' to the decrees of the popular Brummagem. Its members will be as busy devising means to prevent intrusion as the people will be inventing tests for their detection and discovery. And the odd fact will emerge that our one hope will lie in the corruptibility of mankind. The price of admission into these minority societies will be set against the price of the bribe which society's agents will accept; and since man is fortunately corruptible some means of escape to the individual will always remain, whether it take the form of a tip, a vote, a piece of political wire-pulling, or municipal jobbery. But while the individual may escape the worst immediate consequences of such a society, 'none who, being

in the foul morass of resulting " equality ", has been able to discern what national life means, can find in private fortune—wife, children, friends, money—any compensation for the great life of which his veins are empty '.

Those who believe that the change can be turned to immediate good, and do not see in it the breaking of an old civilization, the ruin of which is necessary to the emergence of a new, have the doubtful task of showing how the hierarchical order of society, which has always sprung from its root in land and soil, can be imposed upon an industrial civilization. They regard the latter to be the beginning of a new order, not the anarchy which marks the end of the old ; and if the industrial revolution had occurred when the old order was in vigorous life and before the political and economic changes of Henry VII. and Henry VIII.'s reigns had struck at its foundation, there might have been some hope that the new could have been grafted on the old. The old could then, perhaps, have laid its traditional moral sanctions upon it. But the industrial revolution followed on a preceding economic and moral change, which was deliberately precipitated, and for this reason it seems certain that it will have to make *all* things new, and win its way through a chaos which may involve its own industrial triumphs in the destruction of civilization. The war has shown how precarious the life of civilization is, and the industrial change has proved more capable of destroying than of strengthening it. For to destroy a civilization mechanical means are sufficient. To maintain one moral qualities are required ; and can

it be sincerely said that industrial society has shown one of them, or produced a single virtue, a single idea, peculiar to itself? The only idea that can be mentioned in connection with it is that of equality, and that in Patmore's philosophy was a denial of self-evident things.

The issue is plain, and bound so closely with his preceding theme that readers who find the earlier congenial but recoil from the political inference have no choice but to deny the necessary connection or to content themselves with his theory of personal relations and leave the political inference aside. I have given it here for the sake of completeness and because, not only has it produced some of his most vigorous prose, but also because it has the merit of traversing current views, the chief lack of which is that of a detached critic.

Though his attack on equality was general, it naturally centred upon the equality of the sexes, whose inequality he had found to be the source of all the sweetness of love. It is well to repeat his argument, however, because it provides the best answer to the charge of sentimentality under which *The Angel* has laboured so long, a charge which partly explains the neglect of his writings and the prejudice which his name immediately excites. The theory of this 'sentimentalist' is expressed at length in an essay called 'The Weaker Vessel'.

> There are few more damnable heresies than the doctrine of the equality of man and woman. It strikes at the root of the material and spiritual prosperity and felicity of both, and vitiates the whole life of society in its source. . . . She only really loves and desires to become what he loves and desires

her to be; and beauty, being visible or reflected goodness, can exist in woman only when and in proportion as the man is strong, good, and wise. When man becomes womanish, and ceases to be the transmitter of the heavenly light of wisdom, she is all abroad, she does not know what to do with herself and begins to chatter or scream about her rights; but, in this state, she has seldom understanding enough to discern that her true right is to be well governed by right reason, and, instead of pouring contempt on her degraded companion for his spiritual impotence, she tries all sorts of hopeless tricks—the most hopeless of all being that of endeavouring to become manly—in order the better to attract him who has become womanish.

The argument, it will be seen, is precisely the same as that which he urged against the demos. Its right, like that of woman, is to be well governed by right reason. Consequently he would not admit the modern theory that the most sacred right of any people is the right to misgovern itself. Just as he explained the unhappiness of many a wife on the ground that she was most probably suffering from the 'insupportable doubt as to whether she has got her master', he quarrelled with the older English aristocracy for not taking the trouble to defend its parliamentary privileges. The case is put in the political Odes of Book I. of *The Unknown Eros*, but there is no need to quote from them to illustrate the argument unfolded here. The blame for the unrest among women during the nineteenth century was laid on the shoulders of men: 'The widely extended impatience of women under the present condition of things is nothing but an unconscious protest against the diminished manliness of men'. It should be unnecessary to set beside this defence

of a principle which is now generally denied the honour which he felt should be paid, as of right, to 'the weaker vessel'. Since woman was the last reflector of divine things, to which man was generally blind till through the revelation of love they had been mirrored in her body for him, her weaknesses, once recognized, were seen to become not only the very dainties of love but the natural fountain of her honour. In the same way the principle of inequality, once recognized, gave to the mass of men in society the dignity of a defined status and the honour of a due place in an organic whole. The unity of his theories, erotic and political, is well summarized at the end of the essay on 'Madame de Hautefort', where he says:

> The family ties are those by which God reveals His relation to us and ours to Him; and to misinterpret them is to obscure revelation in its very terms. . . . The relation of man and woman, besides being the first and strongest of human ties, is the source from which they all spring; and a miscomprehension of the primary relation necessarily involves error in the understanding of those which are derivative.

It was therefore proper to give the political derivative its due place in his scheme.

Even opponents of the theory of inequality, if they turn to Patmore's essays, will see in it a refreshingly definite process of thought, which can hardly fail to be a relief after the disorderly surmises, from whatever quarter, which pass for political reasonings to-day. Indeed we have grown so used to loose thinking that clear thinking, because it is clear, is apt to be dismissed as paradoxical, and, in the strict

sense of the word, a paradox it has become. The value of Patmore's theory at present lies not in offering a palliation to existing evils, but in teaching us to regard these evils as the symptoms of a period of transition in which the new forms of the eternal order are trying however blindly to assert themselves. By seeing the principle underlying the change we gain an intellectual clue, and such a clue is the best assurance at the present time of individual cheerfulness.

CHAPTER X

THE APPLICATION TO ART

In the brilliant little essay which gives its name to the volume entitled *Principle in Art*, Patmore says :

> There already exists, in the writings of Aristotle, Hegel, Lessing, Goethe, and others, the greater part of the materials necessary for the formation of a body of Institutes of Art which would supersede and extinguish nearly all the desultory chatter which now passes for criticism, and which would go far to form a true and abiding popular taste—one which could render some reason for its likings and dislikings.

Again, he says, ' sensitiveness or natural " taste ", apart from principle, is in art what love is apart from truth in morals. The stronger it is, the further it is likely to go wrong.' He therefore attacked the sympathetic criticism of the aesthetic school on the ground that it was intellectually emasculate ; and defended criticism based upon principle because, though ' such criticism may not be able to produce good art, bad art collapses at the contact of its breath, as the steam in the cylinder of an engine collapses on each admission of the spray of cold water ' ; and thus, ' although good criticism cannot produce art, it removes endless hindrances to its production,

and tends to provide art with its chief motive power, a public prepared to acknowledge it'. Criticism, then, he concludes, 'is not the expression, however picturesque and glowing, of the faith that is in the critic, but the rendering of sound and intelligible reasons for that faith'. Patmore practised that which he preached, and most of the essays which follow are statements of principle, selected to illustrate those principles neglected at the present day. Thus the second essay is upon Wordsworth's text, 'A cheerful heart is what the muses love', and elaborates the commonplaces that 'good art is nothing but a representation of life', and that in proportion as life and art become high and pure they become gay, so that Dante's *Inferno*, which 'is pervaded by the vigorous joy of the poet at beholding thoroughly bad people getting their deserts', and Shakespeare's tragedies leave no stain of melancholy upon us however many tears they may have drawn. The Byronic melancholy, for example, which was nearer to Patmore than to us, collapses at the breath of this criticism, and the reader is sent upon his way rejoicing. The third essay, upon 'The Point of Rest in Art', brings criticism back to an illustration which has the authority of a self-evident fact. It is not our purpose here to summarize the principles expressed in this superlative little volume of criticism; they are carried furthest in the masterly essay on 'Architectural Styles', which deserves to be much better known than it is. That which we have to note is rather how Patmore differs from other critics, even the great ones, including the meteoric Coleridge, whom he names. He

differs from them not of course in the possession of a superior equipment or a keener insight than theirs, but in a remarkable power of collating principles with each other, of inferring forgotten principles from those remembered, and in a gift of general co-ordination which was checked by a serious and passionate study of technical problems. The time and devotion which he gave to English metrical law, the technical analysis to which he subjected particular passages of poetry, showed indeed an exceptional seriousness ; and his biographer, Mr. Basil Champneys, the architect, somewhere records his sense of architectural questions, which was put to the test in the house Heron's Ghyll, near Uckfield, which Patmore, with J. F. Bentley, rebuilt for himself. He may be said to have had practical experience of the two arts to which he was most attached, the arts of poetry and architecture ; and this experience made him a critic who was also a craftsman, and not merely a generalizer upon art. We gain from his criticism, then, a body of doctrine, a sense, if the paradox be allowed, of the architecture of the subject ; and I believe this quality of his criticism to depend largely on the fact that his criticism was inspired by the idea, the central theme, already elaborated.

The essay, already mentioned, on ' The Point of Rest in Art ', refers the point of rest to its simplest illustration, in the human body, and is therefore an apt instance in the sphere of art of the idea of Homo, which, in its bearing upon religion and knowledge, we discussed in the eighth chapter. But the parallel can be pressed further ; and the

aim of this chapter is merely to show the presence of his general theory at the centre of his criticism, which I do not pretend to do more than refer to it. For if his theory is the root, as he believed, of knowledge, we should expect to see the theory at the heart of each department, and the heart once sounded, its arterial influence will be manifest. Poetry, the chief of the arts, provided Patmore with the simplest illustration of that dual entity of which nuptial love was the chief parable in ordinary life. Thus, he says in the fourth essay, 'Bad Morality is Bad Art':

> Masculine law is always, however obscurely, the theme of the true poet; the feeling, with the correspondent rhythm, is its feminine inflection, without which the law has no sensitive or poetic life. Art is thus constituted because it is the constitution of life, all the grace and sweetness of which arise from inflection of law, not from infraction of it, as bad men and bad poets fancy.

Again, in 'Emotional Art', he declares:

> Poetry . . . is the mind of *man*, the rational soul, using the female or sensitive soul, as its accidental or complementary means of expression, persuasive music assisting commanding truth to convince . . . the Gentiles,

that is to say, the natural affections and instincts. The poet therefore is the apostle to the Gentiles in the same way that natural love is the precursor of divine.

What are the distinguishing marks of the masculine and the feminine element in poetry? 'A strong and predominatingly masculine mind', Patmore writes in the nineteenth essay of *Principle in Art*,

' has often much to say, but a very imperfect ability to say it ; the predominatingly feminine mind can say anything but has nothing to say ; but with the *double-sexed* insight of genius, realities and expressions are wedded from their first conception, and . . . of more practical importance than the results of the highest efforts of mind when either of its factors greatly predominates over the other.' Genius, he says in the same essay, ' is that divine third, quickening, and creative sex, which contains and is the two others ', just as the third person of the Trinity is the embrace or synthesis of the first two. In art, we are told, genius is therefore ' the rare power of seeing self-evident things ', or in other words perceptive reason. Thus, ' the feminine factor in the mind of the great poet is, indeed, a greater thing than woman—it is goddess '. If this seems abstract, the illustration which follows will be refreshing :

> Keats and Shelley, in their best works, were wholly feminine ; they were merely exponents of sensitive beauty ; but into this they had such an insight, and with it such a power of self-identification as no woman has ever approached.

Patmore emphasizes his argument by saying, ' the hall-mark of genius is the marriage of masculine force of insight with feminine grace and tact of expression '. It is in virtue of his double endowment, because in fact he is as nearly a complete homo as humanity allows, that the great poet is a psychologist to whom the secrets of the heart of either sex are open.

So much then for the nuptial idea in relation to

art, the recognition of which enables us to distinguish the order or sex to which an artist belongs and to understand the type of beauty which he represents. Poetry of the highest order is necessarily affirmative. The imagination, which is the language of vision, is subordinate to the controlling intellect which states the truth which it uses the imagination to express. But since the highest order is necessarily rare, the work of such a great poet as Wordsworth being notoriously unequal, what are we to say of the perennial stream of exquisite verse? There is an admirable comment on this in *Religio Poetae* which I take from the opening essay which gives its title to that book:

> There is a kind of perception in a state of solution which must not be overlooked or depreciated. It is the substance of most of the finest lyric poetry, and of the religion of nearly all religious people, especially in these days. But this fire-mist is a very inferior form of perceptive knowledge. There is none of it in Dante. It is the 'Infinite' without the 'Bound', and is not sufficiently concrete to be very serviceable or communicable, being unintelligent heat, though that heat may be holy.

This is an admirable statement of a quality felt by many but not apprehended clearly enough to allow them to accord no more than what is due to its nature. The substance is deficient. Lacking a centre, the saturated solution of the feelings will not crystallize. For, as Patmore says in *Principle in Art* (Essay XXI.), 'the complete synthesis of gravity of matter with gaiety of manner is the glittering crown of art'. Since art, however affirmative it may be, is not didactic but teaches by per-

suasion of the feelings, not only must there be ore to be fused, but the fusion must be complete. In intellectual content Herrick's poetry is as small as it is artistically distinguished ; and it would be hard to find a neater criticism of him than that of Patmore, who summed up all that there was to be said of Herrick in the phrase 'a splendid insect'. Why then do we rate him so high? Because of his style. The real substance of the poetry of Herrick and of such writers as he, is the poet's individuality, his peculiar vision which is interesting exactly in proportion as it is perfectly expressed. Style then is the perfume of an individuality, and he who gives us that perfume is loved for its sake, more sensitively perhaps than those of greater honour who with that give something beside, namely, a vision of truth. For, as Buffon well knew, 'Style is the only passport to posterity. The matter is foreign to the man and is not of him. The manner is the man himself'.[1]

What, then, had Patmore to say upon the subject of style, the importance of which he never underrated? In his essay upon 'William Barnes' in *Principle in Art*, Patmore wrote :

'That which is of the greatest value in every true artist is his style. . . . The absolute pre-eminence of style above all other artistic qualities seems not to have been sufficiently perceived or at least insisted upon by critics. As the human face, the image of the soul, is incomparably the most beautiful object that can be seen by the eyes' (the context shows that Patmore here means by 'beautiful' 'supremely interesting' and 'attractive'), 'the soul itself is the supreme interest and attraction of the intellectual vision, and the

[1] Samuel Butler's translation in *Evolution Old and New*, cap. viii. p. 77.

variety of this interest and attraction is limited only by the number of those, who, in action, manners, or art, are endowed with the power of expressing themselves and their inherent distinction, which, could it be fully displayed, would be found to be absolutely unique in each person. . . . It has been said that he alone who has no style has true style. It would be better to say that he who has no manner has the first condition of style. As theologians affirm that all a man can do towards obtaining positive sanctity is a negative avoidance of the hindrances of sin, so style, the sanctity of art, can only appear in the artist whose ways are purged, in the hour at least of effective production, from all mannerism, eccentricities, and selfish obfuscation by the external life.'

Since the happy hours of ' effective production ' will come but intermittently, ' a conscientious worker will sometimes conceal their rarity by spending so much labour upon the comparatively uninspired context of passages inspired that his whole work will be upon the same level of verbal beauty '. That is what polish means. It is to make the vessel worthy of the wine which sometimes fills it, not to spoil all by attracting attention to the gilt added self-consciously to the vessel itself. For since the strongest influences are indirect, a style moves us in proportion to its spontaneity, even though the form of that spontaneity will vary with the temper of the writer. The daintiness of a Herrick and the dignity of a Hooker are equally spontaneous because they are equally sincere. It is the sincerity thus spontaneously expressed which moves us, for we are then confronted with our proper study, Man, the only reality to which we give our fully awakened interest. Thus it comes that in art, as in life, ' there is nothing comparable for moral force to

the charm of truly noble manners '. These can only be achieved, as Patmore shows in the most delightful of all his essays, ' Madame de Hautefort ', in proportion as obedience is complete first in the weightier matters of the law, then in the less, until at last the law is fulfilled with a freedom of perfection that has become a spontaneous habit. Beauty is not so much an end in itself as the product of an end which has been gained. Thus in so far as style is sought it will be missed, and in so far as hindrances are avoided it will be in process of attainment, for it is the last reward of a perfectly fulfilled vocation.

His criticism of the arts included the art of manners, and that this inclusion could be made without strain or affectation is a good example of the suggestiveness of his idea. We may be led to study this idea because of the interest which this or that application may have for us, but in the end the enduring interest is found in the idea itself. It helped to make Patmore, in the words of a distinguished critic, ' a great thinker on the principles of art ' ; and his criticism is enlivened rather than distorted by the waywardness of his personal dislikes and preferences. We do not think of him as a critic who said the last word on Shelley or Blake, but we remember him as the critic who did more than any modern writer to prepare for that *Corpus Juris artis* of which every great critic has dreamed. It is less his personal judgements than his principles which impress us, and the impression is strengthened because these in turn lead us to the foundation whereon they were built.

We have seen, then, the function of criticism,

the value of principle, the two factors which are married in genius, and the different parts which they play in artistic work, and how we may distinguish the one from the other. We have recorded Patmore's definition of poetry, and the place which he gave to style, and seen how these principles, each of which is carefully reasoned in the essays, radiate from his central theme. Further illustrations could easily be given, but my aim has been not to exhaust the subject but to direct attention to its scope, and to relate, briefly but I hope sufficiently, the widely diverse applications to their common centre. A glance at the general exposition now completed will show that the statement is very far from adequate, but I believe the structure of the book to prove the truth of its primary thesis, that there is a general theory in Coventry Patmore, and that the interest of every aspect of his thought precisely lies in its relation to a common centre, which raises the whole to the level of an original philosophy. That he had such a philosophy has not been recognized, and though there is no field of this neglected country which could not be explored better than I have been able to explore it, the lie of the land must be mapped by some one before the explorations begin. For if Patmore's thought radiates light over a wide circle, it is because the rays emanate from a single sun.

CHAPTER XI

THE RECOIL

No statement of the idea of Coventry Patmore can claim to be complete unless some regard is given to the recoil with which it has been greeted. True, this has been attributed to the precision of his narrative in *The Angel*—for few people seem to read his prose—to the detailed treatment in poetry of a modern love-story, and to the presence in that story of the domesticities. But, as I had occasion to remark at the beginning of my analysis of *The Angel*, the domesticities are as much the proper atmosphere of married love as the moonlight and the balcony are that of courtship. This fact allows us to infer that the great and persistent error has been to regard the style of Patmore's epic apart from the subject, and to pretend that a violent recoil from the subject is only a recoil from the style.

In what then does this recoil consist? In principle it is a recoil against the existing institution of marriage. No one has put it more concisely than Dr. Johnson, when he remarked:

> It is so far from being natural for a man and woman to

live in a state of marriage, that we find all the motives which they have for remaining in that connexion, and the restraints which civilized society imposes to prevent separation, are hardly sufficient to keep them together.[1]

Dr. Johnson's description is valuable because he was an acute observer, who had been married, who was reasonably happy in his marriage, who respected the institution, and who did not shrink from facing facts. His observation, then, that marriage is 'unnatural' means that the passion of love, the ordering of which is necessary to itself and to society, is in covert rebellion against that order, which the passion finds to place control upon itself. The only answer to this admission is, first, that love is a mystery which, like life, it is not in the competence of most men to refuse, and that those who reject the institution of marriage do not appear to be happier or better people than the married, while their conduct involves them in difficulties and situations as inconvenient, to say the least, as the hard situations of matrimony. But the matter must not be prejudiced by reliance on extreme cases; and we may be content to observe that love without marriage is no solution of the difficulties with which married love is known to be beset. Nor does the bachelor escape them. We may go a step further and say that love without marriage generally means love without children, and since children are as much for love as love is for children, love without marriage (by which Patmore meant Christian, sacramental marriage) is the enemy of love itself. It is

[1] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, vol. i. p. 497. Macmillan, 1900.

only because love and passion are confused that such a statement is thought to be exaggerated.

This then is the prime cause of the recoil from Patmore's theory of love, a recoil which asserts that marriage is necessarily 'dull', and that the muse should echo the revolt, know nothing of matrimony, and refuse to describe the atmosphere in which it abounds. The overture is not only preferred to the piece, but even mistaken for it. The truth in fact seems to be that the delights proper to marriage are incredible to most people who cannot believe that the institution is not, of its nature, prosaic. It is as if the laws of prosody and of metre were recommended as the delights of poetry; yet they do condition that delight which is in proportion to the perfection of the poet's obedience to them; they add an edge to the enjoyment of poetry for those who are familiar with their secrets; and the secrets of love are like the secrets of prosody in that they require the attention of a lifetime. This attention most people will not give. There is also this excuse for the sceptic, namely, that happy marriages are seen but not heard. It is the unhappy unions which attract attention or are privately discussed, especially by persons who forget that the virtue of a natural institution is unaffected by human failure to make the best of its proper fruit. The world, too, lives under the tyranny of a general superstition, the superstition that the Devil has all the best tunes. He always has a case, if only because discords are necessary to harmony. Health has no symptoms. We still wait a definition of sanity, and most poets, like most doctors, busy

themselves less with the normal than with the diseased. This is the reason that, unless Patmore be honourably excepted, Thomas Traherne is the most remarkable of poets. For, alike in verse and prose, his sole concern is felicity. As in his poems, so in his *Centuries of Meditations*, page after page is written describing nothing but joy. This sustained feat is unique among writers. It should hardly surprise us then that a later poet who made married love the definition of joy should seem incredible, and the more so for being, unlike Traherne, not limited to a mystic or abstract felicity, but engaged in describing the whole pedigree of love from the moment in which it begins to the experiences in which it is completed.

But it is necessary to add that there was in Patmore's personal temperament a quality which gave more precise occasion to criticism, though it is general and not particular as people have been accustomed to suppose. The tendency in man to love woman is usually accompanied by another, namely, friendship, which implies a man's delight in the society of men for its own sake. This can be characteristically observed in the unwillingness of most men to leave the dining-room after dinner, in amusing contrast to the expectancy with which they are awaited by the ladies. Now it cannot be denied that marriage is an interruption to friendship. Married life does divide a man from his friends. He sees less of them, and they of him ; though his desire for their company persists. Indeed, as Patmore does not fail to note toward the end of *The Angel*, a man retains something of

the 'waywardness' of the bachelor after marriage: it is natural to him, an experienced wife remarks, and must be accepted accordingly. But with the strength of this fact Patmore's poetry hardly reckons. It is the only important fact, I think, which it does not illustrate. In one of his letters he complains of living 'in a wilderness of fair women', and asks his correspondent to give to him the benefit of a man's society. But friendships played a subordinate part in his own life. Most were discipleships which began in enthusiasm and ended when he had learnt all that his friend could teach, or alliances for common objects like that with Frederick Greenwood, the discerning editor of the *St. James's Gazette* and of the short-lived *Anti-Jacobin*. Of the intimacies of friendship there is little or no trace. Nor was he happy, except occasionally, in men's society. It was not Patmore's native atmosphere. He was never in the least a clubman. His membership of the Savile was brief, and the descriptions which he gave of his dinner-parties in London have, as one of his critics has observed, a quaint air of exaggeration which shows that he was not really at home in men's society. There was then suppressed in Patmore a quality which is present in most men, who prefer the easy give-and-take of one another's society to the company of women with whom they do not happen to be in love. Thus in 1850, when he was on a visit to Tennyson, he wrote to his first wife:

> It is a great good to me to find that I have my superior. . . . In Tennyson I perceive a nature . . . at the foot of which I can sit happily and with love.

His later modification of view was no less strong. He had either to dominate or to be dominated by another. Thus his friendships usually began with discipleship and ended with apostasy ; and the company of men for its own sake had not the usual pleasure for him which most men unaffectedly find in it. In marriage domination and discipleship are complementary, but the former is fatal to friendship, wherein an equality of affection is the rule. It is an interesting comment, alike on Patmore's character and on his art, that friendship had no honoured place in his philosophy. No relation between equals could form part of it ; for the delights of love, with which he was always concerned, are conditioned by the inequality of the parties, as we have seen abundantly throughout. It was his peculiar vocation to meditate on the nature of love, and to find in that mystery the clue to every problem. For this he was born, to this with marvellous integrity of vision he devoted his life ; but because of this there was suppressed in him a quality which is prominent in most of his sex.

This suppression, I think, explains a subtle element in his style, and a latent prejudice against his work which lingers in the minds of most readers ; but I do not think that his philosophy is disabled by it. For Patmore had only to press his doctrine of the Homo a little further, namely, into the relation of members of the same sex, to have noticed that sex remains an aspect between man and man no less real than it is in the larger emphasis between man and woman. For in each pair of friends one will assume the masculine aspect in some respect

toward the other, and the second the feminine, in the same respect, toward the first. Just as he recorded with interest that the second person of the Trinity had been discerned at certain heights of contemplation as the Bride, so between man and man the masculine element of one will become feminine toward that of the other whenever the giving or receiving is the special mark of each. Even in friendship the inequality is there, if only because each man is homo, and homo is neither sex but both. Who again has not observed in married life the masculine aspect often pass to the bride in relation to her husband, as it is obviously hers in relation to her children? If therefore the wife can be the husband, as she often is in practical matters, then between the friends the changing aspect will be no less marked. I argue the point because Patmore failed to do so. Yet his philosophy would be open to a damaging attack if there was no more room in it for friendship than he had explicitly allowed himself. But his philosophy can be pushed a good deal further than he pushed it, and in regard to friendship, it is pleasant to observe that this philosophy is superior to its author. His aim was to set the definition and nature of married love in a strong light, thereby to show how much it suggested, how much it covered, how much it explained. He was fully conscious of the difficulties in the way of love's fruition. It was a perilous, if glorious, manifestation of life. The difficulties indeed were a necessary condition of its fruition. It was the primary mystery. For this reason, and because it was the precursor to a higher

mystery, the course of love could not be expected, or even desired, to be smooth. If men fully understood it, or were fully capable of it, love would miss the tantalizing hold by which it engages their attention for something of which human love is the symbol only. For as he justly remarked in *Religio Poetae* (p. 140), 'who but a "scientist" values greatly or is greatly moved by anything he can understand?'

His personal limitation was valuable to his peculiar mission. It enabled him to concentrate on the subject. But it is not required that a man should be able to *expound* love with Patmore's fullness in order to accept his statement of its principles, respect its practice, and make an apprehension of love's mystery the centre of his articles of faith. For nuptial love may be the central fact of human experience without depriving men of less symbolic relations, such as Patmore held friendship to be. Nor can a man expect to enjoy after marriage the full degree of that particular freedom which he was prepared to sacrifice when he ceased to desire to remain a bachelor. He cannot have it both ways. Moreover marriage is the rule. It is expected to happen to everybody, and as such it succeeds friendship as naturally as work and responsibility succeed the comparative leisure and freedom of youth. The interruption of friendship by marriage, then, would have been regarded by Patmore as one more sacrifice laid upon the altar of love, if Patmore had ever fully appreciated this reality and, in consequence, this sacrifice.

In conclusion, we may add that passion differs

from love in being 'a bond-disdaining spirit'. It is an 'infinite' desire, without law, and therefore without form and boundary. Until it shall have said *legem tuam dilexi*, it is not love, for love like verse has a form and owes its distinction to the degree of its obedience to it. Such chance as there is of reducing the revolt against marriage, then, must lie in the clearer apprehension by lovers of the form of that mystery to which they have surrendered themselves. To sharpen this apprehension was Patmore's achievement. He accomplished it by showing that the delights of love were inextricably conditioned by its laws, and that each particular delight was created in the fulfilment of some particular duty. Its laws are therefore exalted because of the limits which they impose; and more than this, he has found words to express a hitherto unuttered sweetness, and to give to its silence the gift of sound. Perhaps the chief contribution of his poetry was not only to rescue modern life for the epic, but to add to the traditional and splendid music of the epic the hitherto absent cadence of a still small voice. Because of this peculiar music, we may apply to Patmore's verse the words of Landor: 'It is not wisdom, O Aspasia, it is the manner of imparting it which affects the soul', and in him the manner of the poetry is the perfume of its matter as the scent is inseparable from the rose. To the manner in the Odes a sincere praise has been given: it is as if he had invented in the free iambic a new manner of verse. In *The Angel* the distinction of the style is apparent to any one with at all a subtle ear for verse. The Preludes, where no

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unaccustomed demands are made upon the reader, intersperse the sections of the narrative on which they hang as pearls upon a string. But without the body of narrative, the epic would dwindle to a series of lyrics, and in regard to the narrative portions we must remember that vulgarity of style consists in literary or other mannerism, while the introduction of familiar details, in its challenge to our sophisticated tradition, tests poetical language so severely that only a very fine style can survive the attempt. The details are trivial by convention, they are not trivial to the subject, unless that which is true of every past age is false of our own. For if we linger with delight over the design on the shield of Achilles, and with Nausicaa and her girls taking the washing to the shore, why should not Love find in Salisbury Close a fair setting, and in the manners and dresses of its inhabitants a fit *décor* for epic verse? To exclude them on principle is to separate art from life; and the only effect of that is to degrade the one and to make us recoil with loathing from the other. Indeed the secret of this objection is that we are living in an age when art is prized as an escape from actuality. Coventry Patmore's genius lay in his native immunity to so monstrous a suggestion; and his originality consists in the deliberation with which he retrieved for epic poetry that close relation to life which modern poets deny or over-emphasize. In him, in short, the style and the substance cannot be separated. They have never been more happily married than here. Those readers whose attention Patmore is able to hold will never again use the word Love without

knowing that which they mean by it ; and its content in his definition is at once so concentrated and so embracing that they cannot escape the questions : Is love the central human experience which most poets and most religions have indicated, and men so different as Plato and Patmore have believed ? If so, what are we to infer from it ? Upon the answers given to these questions will depend the place which the reader gives to the idea of Coventry Patmore, and the value which he places upon the philosophic content of his poetry.

The nine Muses wander about their mountain with a coombe or coign for the favourite haunt of each. But the summit of the sacred hill is not for any. Erato, Urania, Euterpe wander in its direction ; Calliope, the mistress of the band, goes near the place, but neither she herself nor Melpomene occupies it. The peak of Parnassus is not for them. For it is the place where the nuptials of philosophy and poetry are celebrated ; and of their embrace the Word of wisdom is born.

At a time like the present when the world of thought is as much disordered as the world of action, which but reflects the absence of a common idea, our choice is seen to lie between some general theory or chaos. But general theories are hard to find. It is because one, which has been neglected, is contained in Coventry Patmore that this book has been devoted to its exposition ; but the book would not have been attempted if the theory had not also some unusual claims to our regard. The first is its root in a super-rational yet familiar physical experience which therefore promises more than any logical

system of abstract thought. The second is that the experience is wedded to poetry so that the several claims of imagination and experience are accorded their due place. The third is that the Pagan no less than the Christian mythology contributes to it. Measured by such satisfactions as these, the recoil which the theme has excited is a sorry confession of impatience. It will not survive an attentive consideration of the subject.

NOTE

I WISH particularly to thank Mrs. Coventry Patmore for her generous permission to quote freely from the Poet's works. Without that permission the scheme of the book could not have been adopted. Mr. Basil Champneys was no less generous in placing the two volumes of his Memoir at my disposal ; and the illustration of Mr. Thorneycroft's 'Artemis', which illustrates Patmore's debt to Greek mythology, could not have appeared without the kind permission of the Duke of Westminster.

While the book was in progress, the Editor of *The New Statesman* invited me to write an essay upon Patmore, which at length appeared on March 1, 1919. This was followed by another essay in *The Dublin Review* of October 1919. I mention these because any readers who made their acquaintance will meet in the book certain sentences which were detached from the MSS. and incorporated in these two criticisms.

Mr. Frederick Page, who happened to see them, has put me under a pleasant obligation by allowing me to read and to use his unreprinted essays on the different poems of Patmore. He seems to have been the sole critic, for instance, to study carefully the early poem, *Tamerton Church-Tower* (*First Love*). He has also kindly read my proofs and saved the text from several inaccuracies.

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